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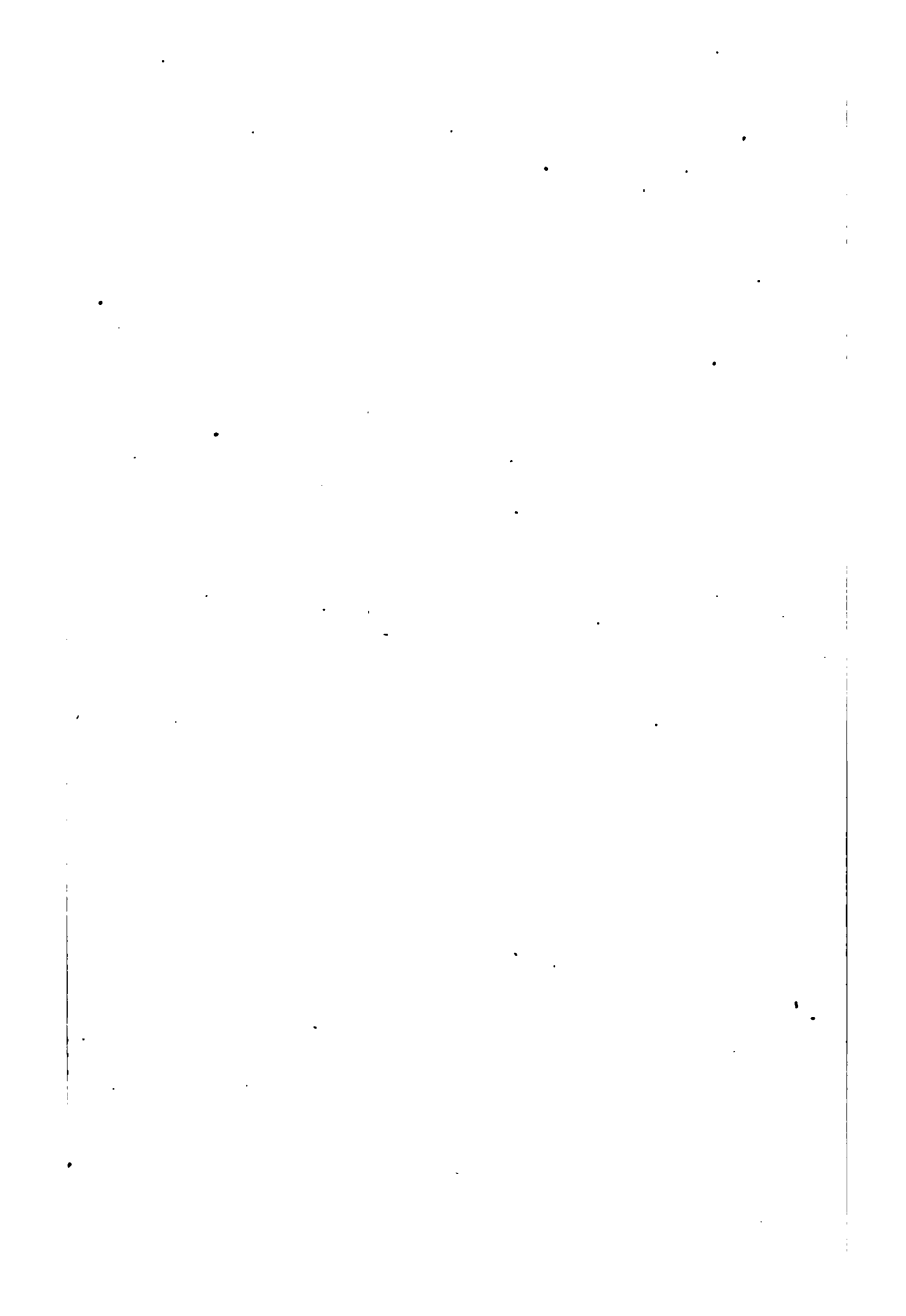
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SHORT NOTES
ON THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF

Teachers in Parish Schools, and other
Readers of the English Version.

BY

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INCUMBENT OF ST. MARY'S, KINGSWINFORD.

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P R E F A C E.

THESE "Short Notes on the Acts of the Apostles" originated in a want felt by the author in his own parish school. He was asked by the teachers to recommend a commentary which would help them while preparing to give instruction in this book, then being read by the first class; but he did not know any which would meet their wants. Having in view the requirements of school-teachers especially, he determined to make an effort to supply a commentary which might be useful to the large and increasing body of fairly-educated but unlearned readers.

These notes are meant to be simply exegetical. This is not a devotional commentary, nor even a practical one in the ordinary sense of the word: it aims only at being explanatory. Moreover, although the compiler has given his own best efforts, he has used throughout, to a great extent, the labours of others, especially modern German commentators, adapting their

explanations to the English Version, and to the use of English readers. He is under the greatest obligation to Meyer, Olshausen, Von Gerlach, Baumgarten, and Neander, but especially the first-named.

The view put forth of the teaching of the Acts is (it is hoped) in entire accordance with the doctrines of that branch of Christ's Church of which it is the writer's privilege to be a member. And he trusts that, in its small measure, the present explanation of this portion of Holy Scripture may be permitted to help teachers of schools and others, who have not the opportunity of studying more full and erudite commentaries, to the better understanding of this Book of God's written word.

KINGSWINFORD,
March, 1860.

INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of this book, the acts or doings of the Apostles, was St. Luke the Evangelist. It was addressed to the same person as his Gospel, (Acts i. 1; St. Luke i. 3,) viz. Theophilus, who is thought to have been an Italian of some distinction. The place where St. Luke composed this narrative is uncertain. And the time of its composition can only be conjectured; most likely it was written soon after the Gospel which bears his name, probably after the first captivity of St. Paul in Rome, about A.D. 64.

It is evident that St. Luke was an eye-witness of much which he relates; and it is supposed that he joined St. Paul on his first journey into Europe, (Acts xvi. 10,) and was his companion at least until his release from prison. The Acts of the Apostles supplies to the Church of Christ an invaluable history; it tells us of the beginning and first struggles of the early Church, of the spread of the Gospel, of its general rejection by the Jews, of its offer to the Gentiles. The character of the mis-

sionary efforts of the Apostles affords an example to all ages.

In reading this book reference should be made as much as possible to the letters of St. Paul, as the Epistles and the Acts mutually throw light on each other: and without a careful study of both no correct notion of the character and state of the Apostolic Church can be formed.

Its contents may thus be classed:—

I. The miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, with the preliminary events which took place from our Lord's ascension to that day, ch. i., ii.

II. The doings of the Apostles in Jerusalem and Samaria among those of the circumcision, and the conversion of Saul, ch. iii.—ix., xii.

III. The doings in Cæsarea, and the reception of the Gentiles, ch. x., xi.

IV. The first preaching among the Gentiles of Barnabas and Paul, ch. xiii., xiv.

V. The council at Jerusalem on the question of the observance of Jewish rites by Gentile converts, ch. xv.

VI. A second journeying of St. Paul, ch. xvi.—xix.

VII. His third journeying until his arrival at Rome, ch. xix. 21—xxviii.

It is a matter of some surprise that this most important book should have received less attentive study at the hands of Christians than the other writings of the New Testament; at least such was the complaint of St. Chrysostom in his day. That eloquent Father wrote fifty-five Homilies on the Acts. Like his other writings, they are full of pious instruction, but are not esteemed equal to his Homilies on St. Matthew and on St. Paul's Epistles. In modern times some greater attention has been paid to the explanation of this history, especially by commentators in Germany. A chronological table of the principal events recorded is added at the end.

SHORT NOTES

ON THE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE first part of the Acts contains a short review of the proceedings in the Church from the Ascension to the Day of Pentecost.

CHAP. I. 1. *The former treatise.*—The Greek has thus, “the *first* treatise.” St. Luke so calls his Gospel. The Acts of the Apostles is a continuance of that narrative: he repeats, though in different words, the great fact of the Ascension, and then proceeds with the account of the conduct of the apostles and disciples in the ten days between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost.

4. *Promise of the Father.*— Cf. St. John xiv. 26, and xv. 26. The apostles were still to wait awhile for the fulfilment of this promise, that their faith might still further be proved, and they prepared to rely “on the invisible presence of their Lord.” A better translation than “being assembled together” is given in the margin of our Bibles, viz. “eating together with them,”—i. e. our Saviour eating to-

gether with them; probably celebrating the breaking of bread in the Holy Communion: (St. Luke xxiv. 30, 35).

5. *Baptized*.—An allusion to the expression of the Baptist, St. Luke iii. 16 and St. John i. 33, "You soon will receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which St. John promised should come, instead of his water-baptism." Christ tells the apostles they shall receive this gift "not many days hence," but He does not tell them *how many*. Patient waiting for God's spiritual gifts is often made a condition of man's receiving them.

6. *Restore again*.—The disciples still imagined that the kingdom—the theocracy—would at once be restored to Israel. They had thoughts of some outward visible triumphs of His cause, though not necessarily of any political supremacy, as in the earlier days of their discipleship. Until the coming of the Holy Ghost the apostles were not quite free from their former Jewish notions of an earthly kingdom. Our Lord neither affirms nor denies a restoration to Israel. He checks curiosity into the secret things which belong to God alone; as St. Chrysostom says, "A wise teacher imparts to his scholar not what he wishes to know, but what it is important for him to learn."

9. *A cloud*.—The cloud is the visible sign of the presence of God, who receives His Son into the glory of heaven: compare St. Luke i. 35; St. Matt. xvii. 5. St. Chrysostom calls the cloud "the royal chariot;"

the cloud hid from human view the perfect glorification of Christ's Body, which, as it was in itself, no mortal eye could behold. After He was taken up, the cloud, it would seem, remained a long while visible, as the disciples continued still to gaze on it.

11. *In like manner*—will Christ at the last day come as the same Body, and in like manner, visibly; St. Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. i. 7. Although Christ had thus withdrawn Himself from His disciples outwardly, yet can He be present where He will, not only in spirit but in body, since all power in heaven and on earth is given to Him as the Son of Man. Some are perplexed because we believe that an earthly body has been received into heaven, but they know not the Scripture doctrine,—“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,” which does not mean that the body is changed into spirit, but that it is also subject to spirit, and made fit for the heavenly abode. “But where our Lord's body is in heaven is a foolish and superfluous inquiry, since it does not become sinful creatures like us to dive into the secrets of heaven, but it belongs to faith to think the highest and best concerning the glorification of our Lord's body.” — St. Augustine, *de Fid. et Symb.*, c. vi.

12. *A Sabbath-day's journey*.—See St. Luke xxiv. 54. According to the traditions of the Jewish Rabbins, it was lawful to walk on the Sabbath-day about the distance of a mile, since the Israelites were accustomed to traverse about that space from the

boundary of their camp to the tabernacle on that day when they were not allowed to collect manna. Exod. xv. 29.

13. *Upper room*.—The “*aliya*,” (see St. Matt. vi. 6,) an upper room in Jewish houses, usually apart from the others, where persons might retire for prayer and meditation. Probably this was the same “room furnished” where the last passover had been celebrated by Christ with the disciples, and the holy Eucharist instituted.

14. *The mother of Jesus*.—It may be observed that this is the last mention in the New Testament of the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord. The unbelief of “His brethren,” mentioned in St. John vii. 5, had most probably been overcome by the evidence of His resurrection. The relationship, according to the flesh, of His brethren, has been much disputed. The word “brethren” was either somewhat widely used, and embraced cousins likewise, or the sons of Joseph by a former marriage are meant, which seems most probable. The belief of the early Church that no other children were born to the Virgin-mother is most consonant with the feelings of Christian reverence.

16. *This Scripture*.—Namely, the place of the Psalms quoted ver. 20.

18. *Falling headlong*.—No mention is here made of his hanging himself, since the knowledge of that and the attendant circumstance by St. Peter’s hearers, is taken for granted. The fearful details of

Judas' death are unknown to us. It has been supposed that the rope broke, and the traitor's body fell, and thus the terrible circumstance mentioned took place. But it is unnecessary to form any conjectures; enough that we receive the Scripture account of his end as the most awful which ever befel man.

19. Some commentators suppose that verses 18 and 19 are inserted by St. Luke, and do not contain St. Peter's address; but they seem rather to be a part of his description of the fate of Judas.—*Acedama*, "the field of blood," thought to have been in the valley of Hinnom. See St. Matt. xxvii. 8; Jer. xviii. 1, xix. 2, 6.

20. The two places of the Psalms quoted are Ps. lxxix. 25, with a change from the plural to the singular, and Ps. cix. 8, literally quoted from the Septuagint version.

21. An indispensable condition required in the new apostle was that he should have been with Christ during His ministry on earth, from the time of His Baptism to His Ascension. That these two had been among the seventy disciples is only a conjecture, though a probable one. It is observable what weight St. Peter lays, on the choice of the new apostle, on his having been a witness of the historical facts of the Gospels. To be a witness of the resurrection was essential, since to believe this was to believe all.

23. The assembled disciples appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, and surnamed Justus, and Mat-

thias. The first of these, like Thaddæus, among the apostles had three names. Of him nothing further is known. He is not the same with Joses Barnabas, as is evident. Of Matthias we have no historical account. St. Jerome tells us, as the tradition of his time, that he preached the gospel near the mouth of the river Apsarus and the haven Ilyssus. He is said to have suffered martyrdom; but the doings and sufferings of the most of the apostles who preached the Gospel and founded Churches are not recorded, as if to teach us the little value of human fame. The works of the greatest benefactors of mankind are not known to men: they have their praise, not of man, but of God.

25. What a solemn expression is the one in this verse concerning the state of Judas, "that he might go to his own place." St. Peter does not venture to speak of the place even of the traitor in the world of spirits: it was one suited, prepared for him, and for such as he.

26. They wrote the names of one or other of the persons named on tablets, and placed these in some vessel; this was shaken until a name fell out.

CHAP. II. 1. *The Day of Pentecost*.—i.e. the fiftieth day after Easter. The feast was also called "the feast of weeks:" (compare Exod. xxiii. 16; Deut. xvi. 9, &c.) There is no reason for doubting that the Day of Pentecost, on which the Holy Ghost descended, was the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. The Church has always so held, and accordingly

celebrated the Christian feast on the seventh Sunday after Easter, that is, Whitsunday. What was the place where the apostles (and disciples) were assembled on the morning of the feast of Pentecost, has been questioned. By some the "one place" has been supposed to be the upper room of which mention is made in the preceding chapter; others have thought it was one of the thirty halls, or large rooms, (called by Josephus, *Antiq.*, viii. 3, 21, *oikous*,) which were around the main building of the temple. This opinion derives probability from the hour, (the third hour of the day, i. e. 9 o'clock in the morning,) which was one of the usual times of prayer, and likewise from the great number of persons who were attracted by the news of the wonderful event. Those "Parthians, Medes," &c., were most likely worshippers met at this hour in the temple. It is less easy to understand what is described, if we think of an upper room in a private house.

2. A rushing sound was heard from heaven, not a tempest or storm itself, but a noise resembling such. Their attention thus awakened, the appearance of cloven tongues becomes visible.

3. The cloven tongues signify the diversity of languages which were imparted to the apostles: the appearance of fire represents the piercing efficacy of the word preached by them. It sat on each of them; for though there are diversities of gifts, yet it is *one* spirit. See 1 Cor. xiv.

4. Here was fulfilled the promise made St. Mark xvi. 17: the languages spoken were those of the different strangers in Jerusalem. We need scarcely suppose, with St. Augustine, that all the languages in the world were known to the apostles. Such as were required for the preaching of the Gospel were supernaturally imparted. Modern commentators have sometimes endeavoured to explain this miracle as something different from speaking languages without learning them; but all such explanations are in direct violation of the plain letter of Scripture. The chief argument relied on is this—that the gift of foreign languages was not *necessary*, since Greek was spoken in all the countries where the apostles preached. Yes, Greek was spoken by all *educated* persons in the countries visited, just as French is spoken or understood now generally by educated persons in Europe; yet would a preacher be understood by *the people at large*,—in Germany, for example, or in England—who spoke in French?

6. His own language means rather his own dialect (*dialekto*), as many of the strangers collected together spoke the same language but different idioms; as e.g. the Asiatics, Phrygians, and Pamphylians spoke Greek, and the Parthians, Medes, Elamites all spoke Persian, but different dialects. Each heard from some one or other of the inspired preachers sayings in his own tongue and dialect.

9. Elamites dwelt on the Persian Gulf, and are called in the Septuagint, Isaiah xxi. 2, as also by

the Greeks, Elymites (*Elumaiot*). Asia here signifies the whole west coast of Asia Minor,—Caria, Lydia, Mysia.

10. The parts of Libya about Cyrene is Libya Cyrenaica, or Pentapolitana—Upper Libya—the chief town of which was Cyrene. The fourth part of its inhabitants were Jews. See Joseph., Ant., xiv. 7, 2. So many Cyrenian Jews lived in Jerusalem, that they had a synagogue called after them. The native Jews heard their mother-tongues, the different dialects; the heathen Jews (the proselytes) their several languages.

15. *The third hour of the day.*—i. e. 9 o'clock a.m., the first of the three hours of prayer and of the morning sacrifice in the temple. There was a Jewish saying that “no Jew should taste anything before he has said his prayer.” The early Christians were in the habit of receiving the Holy Communion fasting.

17. The expression, “upon all flesh,” seems to carry with it the idea of weakness. All mankind were helpless without the aid of the Spirit, which was now poured out. Among “sons and daughters” St. Peter includes the holy women who were present, (see Acts i. 14,) and upon whom the miraculous outpouring came. The whole prophecy speaks not only of what happened on that Day of Pentecost, but also of the gifts which were imparted to the Christian Church, and exercised by others; e. g. the visions which were granted to St. Paul.

21. In the Prophet Joel, the outpouring of the Spirit is spoken of in immediate connection with the last day. This is the key-note which sounds through all the discourses of the apostles, — “Be converted, for the Lord is nigh at hand.”

23. *Wicked hands*.—i. e. the heathen. St. Peter says, “Ye have taken,” because the act was done in the name of the whole people, who cried, “Upon us be His blood.”

24. It was not possible that Christ should be holden by death, since His Divine power gave Him entire authority over the enemy. He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again.

25. The Psalm is literally quoted out of the Septuagint. David, who here speaks, is a type of the Messiah. What he says of the certainty of escaping the power of death at some time was fulfilled, in the first instance, in the resurrection of Christ, who is the firstfruits of them that slept; hereafter it shall be fulfilled in all who are His.

38. Observe here the connection of the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, with baptism. They were pricked to the heart; sorrow for sin precedes repentance, and is a part of it, but not all. Repentance signifies a change of mind and of life. This was the only condition of their receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39. St. Peter predicts the call of the Gentiles, when he says that the promise is to all that “are afar off.” He did not until afterwards understand

that the observance of the Mosaic law was not necessary to the heathen when they became Christians.

41. The apostles received the firstfruits of the conversion of the world. We may here observe, that the only conditions of baptism are faith and repentance; (see Church Catechism). Instruction in Christian doctrine would follow, not precede baptism.

42. The conduct of these first Christian converts is one for the imitation of all Christians afterwards. They continued *stedfastly* in the apostles' doctrine, in their communion, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper,—“breaking of bread,”—and worship. These things comprise the essentials of the Christian profession.

45. We have not any evidence that this practice of a common fund prevailed in any other Church than that at Jerusalem. No rule of communion in the Church can be deduced from it. The principle of imparting to others of our goods as “every man has need” belongs to every age. But Christianity did not interfere with the ordinary regulations of human society.

46. Although the temple worship was about to pass away, yet the apostles observed it so long as they could. Even Jewish ceremonies and rites were allowed, so long as they were not made necessary to salvation. “From house to house” would be more literally rendered “at home,” or in a house, (*Kat' oikon*,) possibly the upper room in the house spoken of in the preceding chapter.

47. *Such as should be saved*—or rather “the saved,” or those who were being saved, those who accepted the Gospel and were made partakers of its benefits and privileges.

CHAP. III. 1. After the account of the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the power given to shew signs on earth, the sacred writer proceeds to mention one out of many miracles performed, viz. the healing of one who had been born lame. On the third hour of the day, see ii. 15.

2. The gate called “Beautiful” lay on the east side of the outer porch of the temple, leading towards the valley of the brook Kidron. Its other name was the “Gate of Nicanor.” It is described by Josephus as being very magnificent. Others have supposed it to be the gate Sasar, near the porch of Solomon.

6. St. Peter does not perform the miracle in his own name, nor does he say, In the name of God, but “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” adding that despised appellation, in order by this miracle to draw attention to the truth of what he had said, “that God had made this same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

8. Here was literally fulfilled an expression of the Prophet Isaiah concerning the blessings of Gospel times,—“Then shall the lame man leap as the hart.” It is to be observed that the first feelings of gratitude in this man are directed toward God, not towards St. Peter and St. John. When the apostles

fastened their eyes upon him, they might perceive something in this lame man which rendered him a fit recipient of this first miracle wrought by them after the descent of the Holy Ghost.

12. The apostles were anxious at once to disown all merit in themselves. It was not their own power or holiness which had made this man whole, but the power and holiness of Jesus of Nazareth.

16. It was the faith of the apostles themselves, not of the lame man, through which the cure had been wrought. The recipient of the blessing knew nothing as yet of Christ, at least we have no reason to suppose he did; rather his expectation was confined to receiving alms from some unknown worshippers in the temple. God gives us His grace first, before He asks faith at our hands. He bestows first the grace of baptism, and then bids us go and serve Him.

17. St. Peter now seeks, after his reproof, to win his hearers by gentleness. He admits that they had committed this great sin through ignorance. Great as was their sin, it was not unpardonable. Ignorance lessens the guilt of sin, but it does not remove or altogether excuse it: see St. Luke xii. 48; 1 Tim i. 13.

19. There is much difficulty in understanding what St. Peter meant by "the times of refreshing" and the "restitution of all things" (ver. 21). Did the Apostle speak of both as identical, or do "the times of refreshing" relate to the present, the "restitu-

tion of all things" to the future millennial condition? Perhaps we are keeping most nearly to the grammatical construction of St. Peter's words if we understand the two expressions as identical. The Jews are exhorted to repent and be converted, that the times of refreshing may come, "*ὅπως αὐτὸν ἐλθῶσι.*" The conversion of the Jewish people, as we learn from various parts of Scripture, (ver. 21,) is to precede the complete establishment of Christ's kingdom.

21. The construction will allow our understanding St. Peter's words, "who must receive the heaven." He takes possession of heaven as of earth; Christ filleth all things; He is exalted at God's hand, but is likewise on earth. If we interpret the words in the other way, "whom the heaven must receive," still we must not suppose that Christ's presence is confined to heaven.

22. St. Peter had said in the preceding verse that "God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets," and he now adduces the testimony of Moses, and afterwards of Samuel. The quotation is from Deut. xviii. 15. Moses is there warning the Israelites against seeking counsel from enchanter and wizards. He promises that God will never let teachers be wanting to them: a prophet He would always raise up. This promise particularly refers to Christ, since none other except He was equal and like to Moses. All the rest refer to the law as something on which they were dependent. Christ was a lawgiver immediately sent from God. He came to

fulfil the law. He was the substance, the law only His shadow. He completed all that was wanting in the law.

24. The schools of the prophets date from Samuel. They were continued in succession until after the captivity.

25. Ye, the Jews now living, are the heirs of all the promises attached to the covenant made to God with His people. He passes over the law and speaks of the covenant made to Abraham, which was a covenant of grace and not of works.

26. The Gospel was to be offered to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles. Had they as a nation received it, then the Gentiles would have been converted through them; now, their conversion will be after the Gospel has been offered to the heathen.

CHAP. IV. 1. Here we have an account of the first persecution of the Church. It is a kind of representation of the character of all persecutions ever since. First, the Church attracts the envy and hatred of the world by declaring the truth, and moving men's minds to receive it and act upon it. The world seeks at first by less violent means to suppress the movement then, if unsuccessful, becomes exasperated, and uses its utmost force. The captain of the temple was the chief of the Levitical temple-guard, which had the charge of watching the temple and keeping order in it.

4. It would appear that the number of converts was 5,000, besides women and children.

6. The assembly here spoken of was that of the Sanhedrim, or Synedrion. It consisted of seventy members; the president was the high-priest in office. From its Greek name we must suppose that its establishment dates from after the captivity. Probably Ezra was the founder of it, though some have thought it was derived from the council of seventy elders spoken of Numb. xi. 17. Our blessed Lord Himself was brought before this council. See St. Matt. xxvi. 57.

7. The members of the Sanhedrim must have known that the apostles had done this miracle in the name of Jesus, but they desired an open declaration of the fact, that they might accuse them of blasphemy. According to the principle of the Israelitish law, a prophet must perform his miracles in the name of the Lord. The apostles, by doing theirs in the name of Jesus, declared Him to be God.

8. The Spirit of the Lord spake in St. Peter and bore witness out of his mouth. Here was fulfilled the promise made by our Lord St. Matt. x. 19, 20. What a contrast does St. Peter's conduct here present to that in St. Matt. xxvi. 70.

9. The Apostle gives them to understand that it was "a good deed" for which they were called into question. By implication, the injustice of the present judicial inquiry is shewn.

11. It is very possible that many of the council of the Sanhedrim then present had heard Jesus Himself apply these words, St. Matt. xxi. 42. The reiteration

of them by the Apostle, with the presence of the person over whom this name had exercised such wonderful power, was most calculated to move the better disposed minds of the Jewish priests and scribes.

12. St. Peter does not say that all who shall be saved by Christ's name must have known that name; but, there is no salvation through any other. Some of the ancient Fathers were of opinion that all that was virtuous among the heathens was derived unconsciously from the divine Word (*Logos*), and that the name of Christ may be of saving power even to those who have not had the means of knowing it. They who have lived according to the best light they had, may, we trust, be saved, though they have not heard the Gospel,—be saved, not for their own deservings, but through the name and the merits of Christ. Observe how St. Peter takes occasion from the bodily healing to speak of spiritual healing. He refers both to the same cause, Jesus Christ.

13. *Unlearned and ignorant men* seems like tautology, but it is not so in the original; the first word means “unlettered,” the other “private persons,” “laymen,” (*idiotai*,) persons who were not in any public office, were not teachers or doctors of the law, like the scribes.

19. The Apostles were bound to obey, and did obey, the temporal power in all matters which belonged to its jurisdiction. In asserting the supreme authority of God's command, that they must obey God rather than man, they did not so much disobey an earthly

power, as yield obedience to a higher, a heavenly authority. We must have sure warrant for our conduct before we can claim the Apostles' example as a guide to us in like cases. But no doubt instances may occur when we may have to follow their example. If the government should enact a law contrary to God's word or the authority of the Church, we cannot obey such law, but we must be content to suffer the consequences of our obedience to God's word and the Church.

21. The conduct of the Sanhedrim was at first much more mild than afterwards, when the Gospel had made greater way.

24. It is probable that one of the Apostles uttered the prayer, and the rest of the assembly said 'Amen' to it: 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Observe how the Apostles regard the Christians as the body of Christ, and what was done to them as done to Him. The raging of the heathen and the threatenings of the kings of the earth are not so much against them as against Christ.

31. As a gracious sign that their prayer was heard, and an encouragement to their zeal and boldness, they received a confirmation of the great Pentecost gift,—“they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

33. Of the resurrection, as the corner-stone of Christian belief.

36. The son of consolation, or the son of exhortation. Barnabas was a prophet, Acts xiii. 1, and it is probable that he received this appellation on ac-

count of some peculiar gift of teaching. His property probably lay in Cyprus, his native country. We see from Jeremiah xxxii. 7, that in later times it was lawful for Levites to possess lands (even) in Palestine.

CHAP. V. An instance of self-denying generosity has just been afforded in the case of Barnabas, we have now an example of hypocrisy combined with covetousness. The history of Ananias and Sapphira is a very awful one. No doubt the liberality of men like Barnabas would be admired by the other disciples; Ananias and Sapphira wished to obtain the praise but without the cost. There was no necessity for them to sell their possession to give it to the Church, but it was a fearful sin to *pretend* to have performed an act which they had not done. This was the first danger within the Church; hitherto the enemy had attacked from without. This assault was the most formidable, and to be resisted with proportionate energy. The punishment was necessarily a sharp one. There have been many an Ananias and Sapphira in the Church in other ages who have escaped detection or present judgment, but the history before us is a warning to consider well what St. Paul says,—“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.” We have a type of Ananias in Achan (Joshua vii.)

3. Ananias had sinned against the Holy Ghost, and there remained for him no place for repentance. We

here have a proof of the personality of the third Person in the blessed Trinity. A man cannot lie against an *attribute* or a *quality*, but against a person.

5. We cannot fail to perceive in the death of Ananias a direct judgment from God. If it could be supposed that the shame and misery of detection in his hypocritical fraud produced such a shock as to cause the death of Ananias, the judgment was not the less directly from God. St. Peter might not have contemplated the effects of his words; he was the instrument in God's hands for warding off from His Church a danger which at the outset would have been most ruinous. He spoke under the inspiration of the Spirit, who alone can know the secrets of all hearts.

6. The young men here mentioned most probably were officers or servants of the Church, performing somewhat similar duties to those of the anacoluthi of later times. In the Greek the article is employed, the use of which certainly denotes some particular young men.

9. St. Peter here pronounces directly the sentence of death on Sapphira. She had been allowed even a longer time than her husband to reflect on what she had done: instead of confession of her guilt, she deliberately reiterates the falsehood and hypocrisy of Ananias.

13. A remarkable description of the effects of that first exercise of discipline in the Church. The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira caused a line of

separation to be drawn between the believers and unbelievers,—“of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” At first sight this might seem a hindrance to the growth of the Church, but it was not really so: reverence and awe were increased, the presence of the Holy Ghost was acknowledged, and we have in ver. 14 the account of multitudes both of men and women becoming Christians.

15. As they could not reach St. Peter by reason of the throng, they placed the sick in such a position that his shadow (perhaps lengthening, as in the evening) might fall on them. It is not said by St. Luke whether any were healed upon whom the shadow fell, nor the contrary, though we may rather conclude that some were healed. The touching of the hem of Christ's garment has been brought forward as a parallel case; but there was a power in the Saviour's body which could not belong to any other. Still we may believe that the strong faith of those who thus brought their sick was not without its reward.

17. It is not positively stated by St. Luke that the high-priest Annas was of the sect of the Sadducees, only that this party acted in conjunction with Annas the high-priest. We learn from Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. 9. 1, that he had a son belonging to this sect, and it is not improbable that he himself may have favoured their views.

19. The miracle happened by night that it might be known to the believers only, and the others learn it by the effects.

21. *Senate of the children of Israel* means the elders out of the smaller councils in the towns, or the chiefs of the synagogues. The term *geronsia* in the original is the word applied to the college of Greek *gerontes* (elders), and here used of the Jewish council.

24. The chief-priests consisted partly of those who had served the office of high-priest, and partly of the chiefs of the twenty-four priestly classes. These were members of the Sanhedrim.

26. The violence of the fickle multitude might have been as readily excited for the apostles as afterwards it was against them. There would still appear to be hope, humanly speaking, that the Jews might receive the Gospel, since it would seem the common people heard the apostles gladly.

30. The substance of the Apostles' preaching was now, as before, the resurrection of Christ and repentance; without the acceptance of these there could be no conversion.

34. This Gamaliel (see Numb. i. 10, ii. 20) was the teacher of St. Paul, (Acts xxii. 3). He was, according to the Talmud, the son of a Rabbi Simeon, and grandson of the celebrated doctor, Hillel. Gamaliel was held in much esteem for his piety and learning. He is supposed to have been the president of the Sanhedrim in the time of Christ. It has sometimes been thought that he was a disciple, but secretly, like Nicodemus, for fear of the Jews; but there is no sufficient ground for such a notion. The advice given by him on the present occasion was

such as any prudent, observant man might offer, without any bias in favour of Christianity. It rather argues his contempt than his regard for the new sect. He classes it with the insurrections of Theudas and Judas.

36. Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 5. 1, makes mention of a certain Theudas who made an insurrection in the pro-consulship of Cuspius Fadus and the reign of Claudius. He gave himself out as a prophet, and promised to divide the Jordan for his followers, as Joshua had formerly done. He was routed and slain by the Roman force sent out against him. A difficulty of course here occurs; this cannot be the same Theudas, since he made insurrection in the reign of Claudius, while Gamaliel spoke in the days of Tiberius, many years before. There seem but two ways of explaining the matter; either by supposing that there were two persons of the same name who made insurrection, by no means unlikely among a people so ready to revolt as were the Jews in those days; or by supposing that Josephus was mistaken in the date he gives. Without entering at all into the question of verbal inspiration, it is quite evident that we cannot attribute (as has been done by some modern commentators) the oversight to St. Luke.

37. Judas, called by Josephus, *Ant.* xviii. 1. 1, the Gaulanite, from Gamala in lower Gaulanitis, headed an insurrection against the tribute imposed by Augustus. He maintained that it was not law-

ful for the Jews, God's people, to pay tribute to the heathen Romans.

38. Gamaliel's words contain a general rule of wisdom in dealing with religious opinions. History has shewn, in every instance, the folly of persecution. The only question is, how far is the rule to be carried? Though general, is it universal? Is Mormonism, for example, to be allowed? The answer is, that *force* is both inadmissible and ineffectual in such matters. But a Christian can have no dealings with the preachers or disciples of blasphemous and immoral sects. He may apply, surely, the Apostle's command, "No, not to eat with them," nor to receive them into our houses: 1 Cor. v. 11; 2 St. John 10.

42. The practice in the apostles' time is evident from this: they worshipped in the temple so long as they could, and held their own assemblies at home, or in the house, which is a more correct rendering than "in every house."

CHAP. VI. 1. This chapter introduces us to the account of the first martyrdom in the Church, that of St. Stephen the deacon. The "Grecians" were the Greek-speaking Jews, most probably proselytes (see St. John xii. 20) who had been converted to Christianity. It has been thought by some that there were, before this time, officers taken from among the Hebrews to administer the alms for *their* poor, and that the Hellenists, or Grecians,

complained on account of the unfairness of the distribution. It seems, however, most probable, that we have here the first institution of the order of deacons; for though the name 'deacon' is not mentioned in the short account given, yet from the terms employed, "ministration," "diaconia," "serve-tables," "diakonein," we may be sure the title was derived. The tradition of the Church has always regarded the appointment here made as the establishment of the diaconate. We find from Euseb., H. E., vi. 43, that the ancient Church was so exact in following the example here given, as not to allow of more than seven deacons in a Church: thus at Rome, in the third century, there were forty presbyters, and not more than seven deacons. But while the Church has authority for this third order in the ministry, circumstances must determine the number to be appointed. But the intention clearly was that the diaconate should be a separate order, and not an introduction, except in rare cases, to the order of presbyters. Cf. 1 Tim. iii. 13.

5. With the exception of St. Stephen and St. Philip, the after-history of these seven deacons is unknown. The supposition that Nicolas was the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitanes is altogether without foundation.

6. We have here an example of the apostles' mode of ordination of deacons,—prayer, and the imposition of hands. No ministry can claim to be a lawful one, except authority be given it by the laying on of

hands. Who can claim the right of laying on of hands, except they derive it from Christ through His apostles? The first link in the chain which reaches to our day is formed by the apostles themselves; the ministerial authority is handed on from them. See 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6.

7. The conversion of a great company of the priests is very remarkable. These belonged most likely to the sect of the Pharisees, who were more open to conviction than the cold-hearted Sadducees.

8. To St. Stephen at his ordination was communicated, among the gifts of the Spirit, the power of working miracles. How long this gift continued in the Church we cannot ascertain with certainty. But there is no reason to doubt that Christians after the time of the apostles possessed the power of miracles, there are instances given on such good evidence so late as the third and fourth centuries. Probably the gift was gradually withdrawn as the Christian religion spread, and the need for miracles no longer existed.

9. The Synagogue of the Libertines, or freedmen, was probably formed of Jews who in the wars against the Romans had been made slaves and afterwards released. These, and their descendants afterwards, were joined into a congregation called the Synagogue of the Libertines. In Cyrene and Alexandria a great number of Jews had settled. The strangers from these parts had synagogues in Jerusalem. It would seem as though they had imbibed the Greek love

of disputation together with Greek cultivation and learning. As St. Stephen was an Hellenist, a Grecian, i. e. a Greek-speaking Jew, it was natural for the Jews who belonged to these synagogues to begin the controversy. When they found themselves worsted in it, they had recourse to false witnesses to bring St. Stephen into suspicion with the elders and scribes and the great body of the Jewish people.

14. No saying of St. Stephen's upon which this accusation was founded is recorded. Most probably the false witness was a perversion of the truths he had declared concerning the abrogation of the Mosaic law (the "shadow of good things to come"), now that the substance was given. St. Paul taught the doctrine for which the first martyr St. Stephen was stoned. The Martyr was the forerunner of the Apostle. The blood of the martyrs was, according to the old Christian saying, the seed of the Church; the word Stephen (Stephanos) means "a crown," an apt name for the first martyr.

CHAP. VII. 1. This chapter contains the defence of St. Stephen before the Sanhedrim. The kind of defence he makes is not such as we beforehand should have expected. He enters somewhat at large on the former history of the chosen people, whereas the accusation made against him was this, that he had spoken against the temple and the law. But in this case was fulfilled Christ's promise, that when called upon they should have wisdom to defend themselves in

a manner which their adversaries could not gainsay. St. Stephen's arguments, therefore, were such as were most calculated to prove the truth of the Gospel he taught. He had a twofold object in this defence; he declares, in the first place, his own firm belief in the revelation of the Old Testament, and begins with the narrative of the covenant of God made with Abraham and the patriarchs; he describes graphically the call of Moses, and mentions the building of the temple by Solomon. This was a sufficient answer to the accusation made against him of being an enemy to the law and the temple. But he had a further object, viz. to remind them, by this survey of their past history, of the repeated rejections on their parts of God's revelations to them, and he would lead them to infer that they had been guilty of a like rejection of a divine message in their denial of Christ. And so at ver. 51 he makes a solemn and earnest appeal to his hearers, boldly rebuking them for their persecution of the prophets who foretold Christ's coming, and for their crucifixion of Him who had been foretold. His words went so home that the Sanhedrim refused to hear him any longer.

We are not to consider the death of St. Stephen as a judicial condemnation, (the Sanhedrim had not the power of decreeing capital punishments,) but as inflicted in the fury of the moment by a popular tumult. It has sometimes been asked, how could St. Luke so accurately repeat St. Stephen's address to the Sanhedrim, as there is no reason to suppose

he was present. But the answer is very plain: St. Luke would receive the account directly from St. Paul, whose companion he was so long, and who himself took a leading part in this persecution. That St. Paul should remember every word is not wonderful, if we believe that he was partaker of the promise made to the other apostles of the special gifts of the Holy Ghost.

2. Charran is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Haran. This was a very ancient city of Mesopotamia. In the time of Hezekiah it was taken by the Assyrians, (2 Kings xix. 12); the Tyrians traded with it, (Ezek. xxvii. 23); the Greeks and Romans knew it under the name Carræ, and it was celebrated in later times for the defeat of Crassus.

4. There is an apparent contradiction between the statement here of St. Stephen and the narrative in Genesis. We are told, Gen. xi. 32, that Terah was 205 years old when he died: now he was 70 when Abraham was born, and Abraham left his country and went into Canaan when 75 years old; this would leave a period of 60 years that Terah lived after Abraham's departure. Many ways of explaining this discrepancy have been adopted. Some have supposed an error of numbers in the account in Genesis, and that we should read 145 for 205. This of course is possible in a matter not affecting the real truth of the history. Others have thought that St. Stephen followed a Jewish tradition of the time, which spoke of Terah as actually dead when his son

left, because he was spiritually dead, preferring to remain in idolatry rather than follow the guidance offered him. In any case, such differences need not perplex us; even if *we* cannot always explain these slight Scriptural discrepancies, we may be sure that there is no real contradiction. St. Stephen could hardly have made such an error as to a fact of Jewish history in the face of his enemies, without their stopping or contradicting him.

6. The exact time was 430 years, but St. Stephen gives, as common in such cases, a round number.

9. The history of Joseph offers a type of the life of Christ; we may well believe that St. Stephen meant to intimate such a resemblance, and that his hearers would feel it. As his brethren had sold Joseph for envy, so had the Jews for envy delivered up Jesus to the Roman governor (St. Matt. xxvii. 18).

14. St. Stephen quotes from the Septuagint, which gives the number of those who went into Egypt as seventy-five persons, instead of seventy, Gen. xlv. 27. The Septuagint reckons in the number, from 1 Chron. vii. 14, the five sons of Ephraim and Manasseh who were born in Egypt.

16. There is a difficulty in this verse. According to Gen. xxxiii. 19, Jacob bought the field of Hamor, Sychem's father, (Abraham bought the cave of Macpelah near Hebron,) and Gen. i. 13 says that Jacob was buried at Macpelah; on the other hand, Joshua xxiv. 32 says that Joseph was buried at Sychem, (the modern Nablus). No mention is made of the

burial-place of the other sons of Jacob, but Jewish tradition names Sychem. St. Jerome says, in his "Journey of Paula," that she passed through Sychem, and saw there the graves of the twelve sons of Jacob.

20. St. Stephen gives at some length the history of Moses. Some particulars, such as his learning, the beauty of his person, and the age at which he left Egypt, are not mentioned in Genesis. The holy speaker no doubt derived these particulars from the tradition which was prevalent in his time among the Jews concerning Moses. He was enabled to discern the true from the false in that tradition.

22. There is no contradiction in what is here said to the declaration of Moses, *Exod. iv. 10*, that he "was not eloquent." Something more than readiness in speech is to be understood by being "mighty in word."

24. This deed on the part of Moses proceeded from a deep religious feeling of indignation at the wrong done to the people of God, but no doubt with this righteous zeal there was mingled some degree of impatience, which was not satisfied to wait God's time of deliverance. Hence Moses had to endure a long trial of forty years' waiting, during which the great object of his life might seem to him lost. The rejection of the proffered help on the part of the Israelite shewed that the people was not yet ripe for deliverance. They were so degraded by their long bondage, that they could hardly be prevailed on to shake it off. In spite of the miseries they suffered,

they loved the sensual delights of Egypt, and feared the dangers which would follow an attempt to regain their liberty. In reading this history, a Christian must always bear in mind how typical it is, in all its parts, of his own condition.

30. The angel of the Lord who here appeared to Moses was the eternal Word, the second Person in the Blessed Trinity, who afterwards became flesh and dwelt among us.

35. St. Stephen applies this history to the object of his whole discourse. As the Israelites had rejected Moses, so had the Jews rejected Christ; and as the despised Moses was sent to be a ruler and lawgiver, so was the crucified Jesus the Redeemer and the Lord of His people. See chap. ii. 36.

37. The same Moses, whose life is a type of Christ, has likewise uttered the clearest prophecy concerning Him.

38. Lively oracles, or living oracles, because they impart life, have an influence on the soul and conduct, and themselves are indestructible, are certain of fulfilment. St. Stephen, by speaking thus of the law, proves how unfounded was the accusation, chap. vi. 13.

41. The golden calf was no doubt made in imitation of the worship of Apis, which the Israelites had seen in Egypt. From this sin they proceeded further, to the worship of the heavenly bodies. "God turned and gave them up." In support of this accusation, St. Stephen refers to Amos, 25, 26. The worship of

the stars (Sabaïom) formed a part of all the ancient nature-worships. The words at ver. 42, "Have ye offered to Me," &c., will be better understood if rendered more literally, "Have ye not," i.e. ye have not, "offered Me sacrifices," and the meaning will be, that though the Israelites had offered sacrifices in the wilderness, yet were they so marred by their idolatrous practices, as to be as though none were offered.

43. The word *Moloch* means 'king' or 'lord,' and corresponds to the name Bel, or Baal, as the Canaanitish nations named their gods. Under this name was honoured the sun as the principle of life. Remphan, or Rephan, is the Coptic word for Saturn.

44. As a contrast with the preceding, St. Stephen mentions the true tabernacle which was established in the wilderness. The people were without excuse for following vain idols, as God had made known to them the true worship of Himself.

48. Without detracting from the sanctity of the temple as a type of God's dwelling-place, St. Stephen shews, in the words of the Prophet himself, that the Lord of heaven and earth cannot be contained in anything created. Thus is a reply afforded to the accusation of "speaking blasphemous words against this place." St. Stephen honoured the outward temple, without supposing that God's presence could be confined to it, though His presence was eminently shewn there until the Christian Church took the place of the Jewish temple. We do not suppose that God's presence is confined to churches, yet we built

houses of prayer and houses of God, in accordance with the dictates of all religion, natural and revealed. We know that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, yet we use words in prayer to Him, not imagining that He cannot hear us without them, but because words and forms of words are needful to our prayers.

51. We must suppose some outbreak or interruption among the multitude, which causes St. Stephen so abruptly to change his manner of address. He had done all hitherto to pacify their minds and remove their prejudices, but as, in spite of his words, they still vehemently accuse him, he passes suddenly into the language of stern rebuke. We must regard the address of St. Stephen as incomplete, being cut short by the tumult among the people.

53. This means, 'Ye have received the law through the agency of angels: angels, not mere men, have been employed as the deliverers of the law to you.' There is no direct mention in Holy Scripture of angels at the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai, and doubtless this circumstance was handed down in the unwritten teaching concerning the delivery of the law, which prevailed among the Jews in St. Stephen's time. The fragments of truth in this tradition he selected and used. It is remarkable that in the Greek translation, the Septuagint, at Deut. xxxiii. 2, there is the addition, "on His right hand were angels with Him." There seems an allusion to this "disposition of angels" in Psalm lxviii. 17.

55. In what manner this vision was revealed to

St. Stephen it is impossible for us to say. But the saying is to be received, not as a figure of speech, but as a real fact. To the dying martyr the consolation of supernatural assurance of Christ's presence was vouchsafed. It is remarkable that twice it is said that the Son of Man was seen *standing* on the right hand of God, whereas it is usual to speak of Him as sitting on the right hand of God; (see St. Mark xvi. 19). St. Gregory has well observed on this, "To sit is the position of a judge or king, to stand of a champion and defender." Hom. xix., on the Feast of the Ascension.

58. The witnesses were to cast the first stone, Deut. xvii. 7. We have here the first mention of him who was afterwards the great Apostle St. Paul. No certain evidence can be derived as to his age from the use of the word "a young man," (*neanias*), as that was applied to persons from their twenty-fourth to their fortieth year.

59. We here find a direct prayer to Christ Himself as God. That which our Lord Himself said to His heavenly Father, "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," St. Stephen says to Christ, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" an irrefragable evidence of the divinity of Christ.

63. As our Lord's words, St. Luke xxiii. 34. The death of a Christian, though the most painful, is called by the gentle name of 'sleep.' The martyr St. Stephen "fell asleep:" so our Lord says of Lazarus, "Our friend sleepeth."

CHAP. VIII. 1. A direct and immediate consequence of this first martyrdom was the further spread of the Gospel. A persecution of the Church at Jerusalem followed the death of St. Stephen, and the Christians were dispersed throughout Judæa and Samaria, the apostles excepted, who remained at Jerusalem, the post of danger.

2. The "devout men," who carried St. Stephen to his burial, were no doubt pious Jews who were convinced of his innocency. At such a time Christians would not have been allowed to pay the last rites of the holy martyr.

4. The very means which the enemies of the Church used for its destruction became a cause of its spread. Probably, but for this persecution, the first Christians would have clung to the city of Jerusalem, and been unwilling to leave it.

5. This Philip is not the apostle of that name, (we are told, ver. 1, that the apostles did not leave the city,) but Philip the deacon, who is described (ch. xxi. 8) as "Philip the Evangelist, which was one of the seven." The other deacons, after the death of St. Stephen, would appear to be more especially the objects of hatred. The city of Samaria in which he preached is not named: it has been conjectured that Sychem might be the city, as our Lord's teaching had been gladly received there, (St. John iv.); and many believers must have been in the place.

9. We have here mention of the Simon known in

Church history as Simon Magus. He belonged to the class of conjurers (*goetai*) who existed in such great numbers in heathen times, and especially before the coming of Christ. No doubt a great deal of the magic practised was mere trickery. But from the manner in which sorcery is mentioned, as well as demoniacal possession, in the New Testament, we must conclude that it was not *all* deceit. It would seem as though, before the incarnation of Christ, the evil one possessed a power over men's minds and bodies of which since he has been deprived. The ancient Fathers of the Church believed that many of the answers of the oracles were dictated by devils, who could foresee future events with a clearness beyond that possessed by men. Justin Martyr says that this Simon was born at Gitton, in Samaria. He could not, therefore, be the same Simon mentioned by Josephus as employed by Felix to procure the divorce of Drusilla from her husband. This latter was born, according to the Jewish historian, at Cyprus. Simon Magus was regarded by the ancient Church as the author of the Gnostic heresy. From his name is derived the word 'simony,' to signify the purchase of spiritual gifts or a spiritual charge. The conferring holy orders for a bribe would be most evident simony. The payment of money in order to be intrusted with the cure of souls is regarded by the Church as simony.

13. We must suppose that Simon was for a short time convinced by the heavenly power of truth, and

so received baptism. It was but for a time; his heart was not right in the sight of God; his better convictions were but temporary; the old spirit returned: and so he began to regard Christianity as a further means by which he might practise more profitably the arts of sorcery. Hence his iniquitous request at ver. 18. Sorrow and fear seem to have been awakened (ver. 24), but whether they led to a godly repentance is not told us. The opinion of the Church was that Simon did not repent.

17. We find here the apostolic ordinance of Confirmation. After Baptism is the laying on of hands: Heb. vi. 2. This act was reserved to the apostles, as the Church now reserves the administration of Confirmation to bishops; while others were allowed to baptize, as Philip the Deacon. We may suppose that the administration of Baptism was allowed to others besides the apostles in the apostolic age, on account of the increasing number of those who would require this sacrament. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit followed "the laying on of hands" by the apostles. The increase of the gifts of the Spirit is the blessing to be looked for from Confirmation to those who faithfully seek to be admitted to this ordinance; see Confirmation Service,—"*Strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them,*" &c. In the early Church Confirmation followed immediately on Baptism; in after times there was an interval between the two—Baptism and Confirmation—which

was occasioned by the universal practice of infant-baptism. But the English Church does not seem to contemplate that Confirmation should be deferred so long as is now commonly done. See the Exhortation to Sponsors in the Baptismal Service. The practice of Christians from the time of the apostles is quite a sufficient answer to all objections against our founding the rite of Confirmation upon this act of the apostles. It is sometimes said the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit followeth this laying on of hands by the apostles, and therefore Confirmation cannot be derived from this practice. But an increase of the gifts of grace is the privilege of the confirmed, as the Church has always practised and taught.

24. As Simon Magus, according to the account we have of him, was afterwards a bitter opponent of the Gospel, we cannot regard this expression as more than the temporary impulse of fear.

26. In contrast with the double-dealing, greedy conduct of Simon Magus, we have now the simple faith and earnestness of the Ethiopian Eunuch. We are not told in what way the Angel of the Lord appeared to Philip; probably in a vision.

Gaza was a very ancient city. The name is mentioned in Gen. x. 19. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great, and afterwards restored by King Herod. The treasurer of Candace was on his way, probably, to Jerusalem to attend one of the great feasts there. It is most probable that he was a proselyte of the

gate, a heathen who believed on the one true God, and attended His worship, without being admitted to the full rights of Judaism, or practising all its ceremonies and requirements. There is no reason for supposing that he was a born Jew (as has been sometimes done) from the mere fact of his reading the Prophet Isaiah. He would naturally read that book, not in the original Hebrew, but in the Septuagint Version, from which the passage quoted is taken.

The name 'Ethiopia' was anciently used of a very extensive district of South Africa; but here the kingdom of Meroe, in Upper Egypt, is to be understood, since we learn from Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* vi. 35) that the official title of the sovereigns of this country was Candace, as Pharaoh was that of Egyptian kings. Tradition tells us that the name of this Ethiopian Eunuch was Indish, and he is said to have been the first preacher of Christianity among his people.

30. Scripture does not tell us that Scripture is sufficient for our instruction of itself, without an interpreter. The Eunuch had the words of the Prophet Isaiah before him, but their meaning he did not understand, until St. Philip expounded them. God's providence has given us the written Word and the Church. Neither is sufficient alone. Without the written Word as the rule and code, the Church might err from the faith; without the living Teacher, men left to their own interpretation naturally split into sects, and are liable, as ex-

perience shews, to fall into absurd and mischievous heresies, or to give up faith in the Gospel altogether.

37. Simple faith in Christ, without necessarily a deep instruction in the doctrines of the Gospel, was the condition of Baptism.

39. Azotus, anciently Ashdod, one of the five royal cities of the Philistines, (Josh. xiii. 3,) lying to the north of Gaza. Cæsarea is the well-known town on the Mediterranean, the residence of the Jewish procurators. It was built by Herod the Great, and named in honour of Augustus Cæsar; it is also called Cæsarea Stratonites, (from a fort which formerly stood on the site,) to distinguish it from Cæsarea Philippi. We are not told in *what* way "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," whether by directing him by immediate influence and suggestion whither he should turn his steps when he left the Eunuch, not again to see him, or by direct supernatural power. St. Chrysostom understands the words in this latter way, and certainly in the original they bear best that interpretation.

CHAP. IX. From this chapter, which contains the account of the conversion of St. Paul, the Acts of the Apostles becomes rather a narrative of the life and preaching of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, than a general history of the Church at large. St. Peter does not as yet entirely disappear from the narrative, but the chief attention is directed towards St. Paul. This fact may be explained, not only in

the greatness, the zeal, the devotedness of this Apostle, but by the circumstance that the mission of the twelve was more particularly directed to the people of Israel, and only when obstinately rejected by the Jews did they turn to the Gentiles, whereas from the first St. Paul was chosen as a messenger to the heathen world. As the history of the Church becomes more and more Gentile, so is the narrative more and more employed with the doings of its great Apostle. We have in the Acts three accounts of the conversion of St. Paul,—in this chapter, ch. xxi. 1—16, and in ch. xxvi., besides numerous allusions to it in the Epistles. The three accounts, though agreeing in all essentials, differ in one or two minor details; but this fact, so far from impairing the credibility of the narrative, serves to confirm it. Any fictitious narrative would have avoided easily such apparent discrepancies. It is quite impossible to explain away the miraculous character of St. Paul's conversion without doing violence to every principle of sound reason. The change of his religion brought with it only worldly loss and dishonour, and all the writings of St. Paul shew him to us as a man not likely to be carried away by a momentary enthusiasm. The great Head of the Church chose out of its persecutors that man to be its great teacher, who, by character and education, was wonderfully adapted to be a mighty instrument in His hands, to bear His Name before the Gentiles and kings.

In considering the case of St. Paul's conversion as

applicable to us now, two important truths are to be borne in mind,—first, that St. Paul's sin was *before* baptism ; and next, that great as that sin was, in persecuting the Church of Christ, yet it has not its parallel in the careless or evil lives of Christians in general, but rather in the pride of fierce fanaticism ; Saul the persecutor lived after the straitest sect of the Pharisees. He was no self-indulgent man, much less an immoral or irreligious one. He lived up to the light of his conscience. Such men are open to the influence of God's grace.

1. The beginning of the account of St. Paul's conversion clearly refers back to ch. viii. 1—3. Saul so raged against the Christians that, not satisfied with the persecution raised in Jerusalem, he was eager to destroy likewise the believers who dwelt in other parts. It is not easy to decide why he went particularly to Damascus, which lies at the north of Jerusalem, beyond the borders of Palestine ; probably many of the Christians had taken themselves thither after the martyrdom of St. Stephen, where, perhaps, a small Church had been formed after the Day of Pentecost. If the conversion of St. Paul took place A.D. 35, then the high-priest was still Caiaphas, who was afterwards deposed by the Emperor Vitellius.

3. Tradition tells us that close to Damascus, on a bridge, at the entrance into the town, the miraculous light and vision appeared to St. Paul. The

account of the narrator, St. Luke, is here more concise than St. Paul's own description, both in respect to what was done and what was said. We observe that Christ regards what is done to His Church and people as done to Himself.

5. From this reply of Saul we can draw inference neither way as to any former acquaintance with our blessed Lord's Person during His sojourn on earth. Saul perceived that he saw a heavenly Person, a Divine messenger, and therefore so replied. The expression, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," is a proverbial one, taken from the kicking of oxen against the goads. The saying has been understood by some modern commentators in this way,—that the goad, or pricks, was the fanatic zeal for the law which influenced St. Paul before his conversion; and the meaning then would be, 'It is hard for thee to go against the impulse of your present feelings; it will cause pain to flesh and blood to do so, but, nevertheless, such pain you must undergo.' This seems a somewhat forced interpretation. The more usual mode of understanding the expression is the following: 'It is hard for you to resist the power which directs your doings. It is in vain to attempt to overthrow My Church, which I have founded on a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. No weapon formed against it shall prosper. You may kick against My will, but as in the case of the animals who kick against their drivers'

goad, those who do so will only injure themselves.' No argument can be raised from this saying as to the irresistibility of Divine grace. It is not ~~and~~ that it was impossible for Saul the persecutor to resist God's grace then moving him, but that they who resist Christ will only bring ruin on themselves. Compare St. Matt. xxi. 44.

7. In chap. xxii. 9 St. Paul says himself, "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." A little consideration will shew that here there is no contradiction, though a difference in the mode of narrating the same event. Saul's companions (officers whom he had taken for the purpose of haling men and women to Jerusalem) saw the light which shone from heaven, but did not recognise any person, as Saul did; and they heard a voice, but not the voice of Him who spake to the fear-stricken persecutor. They did not hear or understand His words, though their senses told them that a voice was speaking, just as they saw a light without perceiving Him who was revealed to the other. This seems a simple way of reconciling the slight difference in the mode of narrating the miracle. The companions of Saul heard and saw the outward circumstances, but the form and the words of Him who appeared were revealed only to the great convert himself.

13. There is no reason for supposing that Ananias knew Saul personally before his conversion, but he

had heard, either by letters from Jerusalem or through other means, of the fierce persecution carried on by him.

18. The words do not lead us to suppose that actual scales fell from his eyes, but "as it had been," as it were, "scales." For three days the outward light had been withdrawn, but what of inward light had been supplied, no man can say! Observe, that after his wonderful conversion, even St. Paul enters the kingdom of heaven through the Sacrament of Baptism. If ever an outward ordinance could be dispensed with, it was surely in this case. But Saul, to whom the Lord had appeared, "arose and was baptized."

20. From Galatians i. 17 we learn that he "went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." Some commentators have supposed that this took place in the period spoken of in ver. 23, as "many days." In that case it would seem that St. Paul at first began to preach in Damascus, but probably from the feeling that he needed a time for especial preparation, and under Divine guidance, he went into Arabia. There he remained three years. Afterwards he returned to Damascus, and from thence went up to Jerusalem; Gal. i. 18. Nothing further is told us of this period of retirement and meditation; but how, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament Scriptures were understood, we learn from the Epistles, especially from the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Hebrews,

which latter, if not actually written by St. Paul, was no doubt dictated by him, and in character throughout is Pauline.

25. The Jews made use, in the persecution, of the help of the governor under Aretas the king, who at that time, in a war with Herod the Tetrarch, had taken Damascus, (2 Cor. xi. 33.) "By the wall," might be more literally rendered, "through the wall," i. e. through an opening, or more probably through a window of a house situated on the wall of the city.

26. As St. Paul had been in Arabia three years, the apostles might naturally think less of his conversion than its importance deserved. No doubt they had heard of the event, but its effects on the mind of the former persecutor were not yet evident to them, and therefore "they were all afraid of him." It must have proved at first a hard trial to St. Paul to be the object of suspicion to the Christians to whom he wished to join himself.

27. A fitting office for Barnabas, "the son of consolation!" The apostles to whom Barnabas brought Paul, were St. Peter and St. James, as we learn from Gal. i. 19.

29. The Grecians spoken of heré, as elsewhere, are the Greek-speaking Jews, in contradistinction to those who were born in Palestine and spoke Hebrew. Under this name would be included both those born of Jewish parents who did not live in Palestine, but at Alexandria or in Asia, and likewise the proselytes

or converts from heathenism, who had undergone circumcision.

30. The Cæsarea here spoken of is Cæsarea Philippi, the seat of the Roman proconsul on the confines of Syria. From thence he went to Tarsus. We can understand, in part at least, the strong feelings of affection to his native place which induced the holy Apostle to desire to preach there the glad tidings of salvation through Christ. No doubt the first Churches of Cilicia owe their origin to St. Paul's abode then at his birthplace, Tarsus.

31. The persecutions raised after the death of St. Stephen had subsided, and now a short season of rest followed. It has been supposed that the outward cause of this cessation on the part of the Jews was the anxiety at that time occupying their minds in consequence of a threat of the Emperor Caligula to put up his image in the temple. The great Head of the Church had so ordered events that now peace should be the means of spreading His Gospel, as persecution had been before. He maketh "all things work together for good." Both persecution and rest brought about the result of the increase of the Church. Observe how the Churches are spoken of together. Although many, as belonging to different countries, they yet made up one body, as they walked in the comfort of the one Holy Ghost. The word 'edify,' both in the original Greek and in its Latin form, from which the English word is derived, means 'build up.' Christians are edified, i. e. built up in

the Body, the temple of Christ, which is His Church.

32. The word 'saints' is applied to baptized Christians. Thus the Christians at Rome are addressed as "called to be saints." To be holy, or to be saints, is the calling of us all. Thus the Church is called "holy," as consisting of saints. Not that all who are in the Church are holy, or all Christians, saints, but because such is their vocation. Lydda was a considerable village not far from the coast of the Mediterranean, near Joppa; in later times the important town Diospolis.

33. Æneas was probably an Hellenist, or Gentile proselyte to Judaism. Whether he had been converted to Christianity before this miracle of healing, is not mentioned. We need not conclude that he had been already made a Christian, from the omission of all after mention of his conversion: most probably, like the lame man at the gate of the temple, he was one whom the apostles saw to be meet to receive this blessing. Saron was a fertile plain on the coast of the Mediterranean, stretching from Joppa to Cæsarea.

36. With this miracle of healing is joined one of raising the dead in the person of a certain Tabitha, or Dorcas, as St. Luke interprets the word, i. e. 'gazelle.' Dorcas was not an uncommon name among the Greeks for women, and significant of grace and elegance.

42. "We here perceive," says an old writer, "the

manifold fruits of this miracle. God willed thereby to comfort the poor, to restore a holy woman to the Church, whose death would have been a great loss, and to call many to the faith. And surely to herself this restoration to life would be a great blessing, inasmuch as she would prove a more glorious instrument of Divine love."

CHAP. X. We read in this chapter of the conversion and reception into the Church by an apostle of the first heathen, Cornelius, a Roman soldier. He was probably a proselyte of the gate, as it was called, one who received the truths of the Jewish religion without being circumcised. As one uncircumcised, he was regarded by the more strict Jews simply as a heathen. The apostles knew, indeed, that the Gentiles were to be received into the Church of Christ; but before this revelation to St. Peter, they supposed the Jewish rites still binding on all converts who were to be made Christians *through* circumcision. This was the opinion maintained so obstinately by the Judaizers, which St. Paul refutes in his Epistles, particularly in that to the Galatians. The Judaizers did not deny that heathens might be received, but maintained they must first pass through the ceremonies of the law, before they could be partakers of the Gospel. How strongly this opinion had taken hold of the minds of religious men among the Jews, we may see from the circumstance that even St. Peter had difficulty in freeing

himself from it. The first great controversy in the Christian Church was on this point, whether Gentiles might become Christians without submitting to circumcision.

It is very likely that Cornelius had heard of Philip's preaching "in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea," (ch. viii. 40,) and that his attention had been roused to make inquiries into the truth. He adopts the mode of attaining light which God blesses, prayer and fasting. He was a sincere inquirer, not a mere speculative talker about truth. And such gain it, while it is hidden from those who seek it from curiosity, or for intellectual gratification alone. We observe how a blessing rests on those who, under whatever dispensation they live, honestly act up to the light they have, and pray for further light, in accordance with that gracious rule, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

1. Cornelius was, no doubt, a Roman by birth ; at all events, a native of Italy. In general, the legions which were stationed in Eastern provinces consisted of native soldiers, but there were some bands formed of Italians, and so, as in this instance, bore the name Italian legion.

3. The ninth hour being three o'clock in the afternoon, and one of the Jewish hours of prayer. From this it is evident that Cornelius conformed to the devotional habits of the Jews so far as he could. The proselytes of the gate practised the worship of

the one true God, in the stead of the idolatry in which, as heathens, they had been brought up, and observed a purer morality than before; still they were regarded by the Jews themselves but as heathens. The proselytes of righteousness, as they were termed, submitted to circumcision, and conformed in all particulars to the Jewish ritual. We may well believe that Cornelius was deeply occupied with thoughts on the subject of that Gospel about which he had heard, and was earnest in prayer for light and guidance.

4. God rewards all efforts to obey Him. Such efforts must come from faith in God. If any man come to God, he must believe that He is. Cornelius's prayers and alms were the fruit of his belief in God. "A man does not arrive at faith through works," says St. Gregory the Great, "but at works through faith." Every right action that man performs, even though he be not a Christian, must proceed from faith in God, as every right motive and feeling must be suggested by God's grace.

5. "As Christ after His appearance to St. Paul sends him to Ananias for baptism, thereby to keep in honour His own ordinances, so in this case the angel retires and leaves the work of instruction in the hands of St. Peter."—*Von Gerlach*.

7. The devout soldier being no doubt like himself, a believer in the one true God, a proselyte of the gate. The effects of the life and conversation of Cornelius are seen in his own household. Joppa

was distant from Cæsarea about thirty miles. The house of Simon the tanner (a person held in scorn among the Jews, on account of the business bringing him in constant contact with the bodies of dead animals) was on the sea shore of the Mediterranean, a convenient locality for the purposes of his trade.

9. A little before the arrival of the messengers from Cornelius, St. Peter was prepared by a vision for their right reception. The flat roof was an usual place in the East for retirement for prayer and meditation. The trance, or ecstasy, into which St. Peter fell was like that described by St. Paul 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, a state in which the mind is carried up to the contemplating and beholding things of which it is incapable in its ordinary condition in the body. In such a state of trance, the subject of it cannot say whether his mind is in the body or out of the body. The state may be compared to that of dreaming, except that the visions presented are realities, whereas in dreams they are fanciful and unreal, at least in ordinary cases. In a trance, or ecstasis, the consciousness of the outward world is almost lost. The vision presented to St. Peter was that of a vast sheet, with the four corners fixed to the heaven from which it descended.

15. St. Peter is here given to understand that the ceremonial law which had been binding on one people was now at an end in a dispensation which was catholic, was to embrace all nations. Christ came to fulfil the law, not to destroy it, and therefore *all* the law is not so much abrogated as fulfilled in

Him. The regulations about clean and unclean animals were typical. They were meant to teach moral purity. Purity is the essence of the Gospel. It was foreshadowed by distinctions of meats, but when the reality comes the shadow passes away.

17. The meaning of the vision is at once made known to St. Peter. As a Jew he had abstained from intercourse with heathens as "common and unclean," as he had from certain meats, but now he is taught that in Christ this wall of partition is done away.

25. The conduct of Cornelius on the arrival of St. Peter shews that, good man as he was, he had not lost all the errors of his heathen education ; or, perhaps his falling down at St. Peter's feet might be the effect of sudden awe in finding himself in the presence of one who had been so wonderfully made known to him.

28. There is no law in the Pentateuch which forbids an Israelite to "keep company or to come to one of another nation ;" but the exclusiveness of the Jews had increased in later times, so that it became a matter of conscience with the more rigorous observers of the law to esteem all intercourse with heathens as defiling.

35. It would be a great mistake to suppose St. Peter meant to express that if any man followed his conscience, feared God, and worked righteousness, it did not matter what religion he was of ; that he was equally acceptable to God, whether Jew, heathen, or Christian. If St. Peter had meant this, then there was no reason why Cornelius should be baptized ;

it would be as well for him to remain as he was. But what St. Peter did mean was, that in His offers of grace in the Gospel God made no difference, was no respecter of persons. He did not put the Jews above the heathen in this respect; but everywhere, if a man feared God and worked righteousness, under whatever dispensation, he is accepted by God; He rewards him by giving him greater light, as in the case of Cornelius; or rewards him according to his works, when in His providence greater light is not vouchsafed. The notion of a man being safe without Christianity, when made known, is inconsistent with the whole tenor of what St. Peter says.

37. St. Peter supposes that his hearers had known some preaching of the Gospel. Probably Cornelius and the others had heard of Philip in that region, and by that means, under God's grace, had been stirred up in the Centurion's mind an earnest desire to learn the truth of those things spoken about. To Cornelius, thus moved to inquire after truth, was the angel sent.

40. Christ did not shew Himself after His resurrection to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God; because it would have been of no benefit to the multitude that He should appear to them, since if they were not moved by His miracles, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead; and because this was the most effectual means of propagating His religion throughout the world. The testimony of those few to whom He

appeared was as forcible as the testimony of thousands, and only (humanly speaking) through chosen witnesses could the truth of His resurrection be made known.

42. Here we find it distinctly stated that Christ is the "Judge of the quick and dead;" of those who will be found on earth at His coming, and of those who have died in all past generations, and will be raised from their graves. The notion of some modern commentators, that by 'quick' is to be understood the spiritually living, and by the others, those spiritually dead—i. e. the good and the bad—is quite without foundation.

43. See Isaiah liii. 5, 6, lv. 3, 7; Jer. xxxi. 31—34; Ezek. xvi. 60—63, xxxvi. 25; Dan ix. 24; Hosea iii. 4, xiii. 14; Joel iii. 5; Amos ix. 14; Zeph. iii. 9; Haggai ii. 8; Zech. xiii. 1; Malachi iv. 2.

44. We find in the case of Cornelius the only instance in which the Holy Spirit was given before baptism. The gifts of God are not confined to His ordinances, though these are the usual channels of them. But He alone can dispense with His own appointments. Here was an extraordinary case, in which He vouchsafed manifestly to do so. Some have supposed for the especial confirmation of St. Peter's faith, in respect to the admission of the heathen without circumcision and keeping the law. This, as it afterwards appears, was a point on which he felt the greatest difficulty. But though God

Himself thus poured out His Spirit before baptism, we are not to expect ordinarily His gift, except through the appointed means. One case in which baptism was supposed in the early Church to be dispensable was that of martyrdom, called the Baptism of Blood. Here Christ Himself was thought to baptize His faithful follower.

45. The pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the heathen was a manifest sign that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was now at an end. Hence the astonishment of those of the circumcision. The day of assembling in the house of Cornelius may be regarded as the Pentecost of the heathen world. On the Gentiles was poured out the same gift as on the disciples at the first, and, like them, they spake with tongues and magnified God. See Acts ii. 4. As those who came with St. Peter were probably inhabitants of Palestine, and the companions of Cornelius's Italians, it is most likely that these latter spake in the Aramaic language, which was the mother tongue of those living in Judæa.

48. They were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Doubtless the form appointed by our Lord at the institution of this Sacrament would be used, (St. Matt. xxviii. 19,) but, as an old writer observes, "When one Person of the Holy Trinity is named, the whole three Persons are understood." We must not pass over the last words of this chapter, "Then prayed they"—i.e. Cornelius and his company—"him to tarry certain days." They were "golden days,"

as a thoughtful commentator has observed. What wonderful teaching and learning would be comprised in these "certain days."

CHAP. XI. 1. Of how great moment was this event of the admission of the heathen into the Church of God, is seen from the following narrative. All the believers in Jerusalem, not "the brethren" only, but the apostles, were unable to understand this conduct on the part of St. Peter, and so called on him to explain it. It would have been difficult for him to have done so to their satisfaction, on any principles acknowledged by them, had he not been able to bring forward an express revelation and instruction on the matter. The narrative of what had taken place was sufficient to convince the believers that it was God's will for the Gentiles to be received into the Church without submitting to the rites of the law. The sequel, however, (ch. xv.,) shews that the scruples of the strong Judaizing party were not altogether laid aside. St. Peter's narrative in this chapter agrees with that in the preceding, and requires no particular explanation.

19. St. Luke now takes up the history from chap. viii. 4, in order to mention the spread of the Church which followed the dispersion of the disciples through the persecution raised after Stephen's death. It was spread principally to Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch, for the most part among the Jews, but likewise among the Hellenists or proselytes at Antioch, ver. 20.

20. "Some of them" of course refers to them "which were scattered abroad," not to the Jews, spoken of at the end of the last verse.

22. To avoid any abuses which might possibly arise among these new converts, thus brought to a knowledge of the Gospel by the dispersed disciples, the mother Church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to visit them. This notice is important, because it shews the apostolic view of the Church. The apostles did not allow Churches to spring up here and there, independently and in a scattered manner, but bound them together in a living organization. They were knit together as members of one body. The apostles did not convert people by merely preaching to them, (they could not give them Bibles, as none then existed except the Old Testament Scriptures,) but they founded Churches in every place, joining them together in one body.

23. When he was convinced that the work really was God's doing, he rejoiced in it, and exhorted the converts to be steadfast. As it is the mark of charity to rejoice in the truth and in the welfare of others, it is added, "that he was a good man;" which means not so much a mere general good man in contradiction to a bad one, but a man of a loving, gentle disposition, who found his happiness in the happiness and goodness of others. Such would be characteristic of the "son of consolation."

25. Barnabas, who had been the first to recognise St. Paul as a workman in the cause of the Gospel,

did not, return to Jerusalem after he had completed his commission in Antioch ; but probably informed by letter the Church at Jerusalem of this state of things as he found them. He proceeded to Tarsus to fetch St. Paul, and remained with him a whole year at Antioch. The name of 'Christians' was given to the disciples by the heathen, and indeed, as the form of the word denotes, by the Romans: the Jews would not have allowed them this title. There is no reason to suppose that it was affixed in mockery, but merely to distinguish them as a party. Antioch was the great seat of Gentile Christianity, and here the name Christian originated.

27. These prophets in the early Church appear to have exercised an office analogous to that of the prophets in the Old Testament, which consisted not merely or principally in foretelling future events, but in teaching, admonishing, and warning the people. The famine foretold by Agabus came to pass in the fourth year of the reign of Claudius, i.e. 44 or 45 after Christ's birth.

29. Herein the disciples shewed in a practical manner their understanding of the great truth that all the Churches were members of one body, *the* Church, and if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it. Already a form of Church government was framed. The apostles had the supreme regulation. The presbyters, or elders, administered under them.

CHAP. XII. 1. This Herod was the grandson of Herod the Great, by his son Aristobulus. He was the companion of the youth of Caligula, and placed by Claudius over Judæa and Samaria. His residence was at Cæsarea (ver. 19), from whence he had come up to the feast at Jerusalem. This persecution took place most likely during St. Paul's sojourn in Jerusalem, in which case we must suppose his stay to have been only a short one; not the same as that Gal. ii. 1, which would be at a later period.

2. This James was the son of Zebedee, the brother of St. John, and, together with him and St. Peter, one of the most favoured of our Lord's apostles. Nothing further of his history is known, but an ancient writer (see Eusebius, H. E., ii. 9) preserves an anecdote, that his accuser on the way to execution was so moved by remorse that he himself confessed his belief in Christ crucified, begged pardon of the Apostle for what he had done, and joyfully went with him to death.

3. The disposition to favour the Christians which had at first been shewn by the people, chap. ii. 47, was now changed into violent hate. St. Peter was guarded, after the Roman manner, by four soldiers at a time, who were relieved each of the four watches. Two of these soldiers kept guard in the prison and two at the door.

6. Bound according to the Roman manner,—the left arm to the soldier's right, and the right to the soldier's left.

7. Rather stood over him, than came upon him. An angel appeared standing before him as he lay sleeping.

10. The guard posts. (See ver. 4.) "God could have released St. Peter in a moment, but He surmounts all the difficulties one after another, in order to make the miracle more glorious. In like manner He created the world in six days, not as though He required a length of time in which to do it, but that He might detain us in the contemplation of His works."—*Calvin*.

12. This Mary was the mother of the Evangelist St. Mark, whose full names, John Mark, are here given. We have here an example of the nightly assemblings of the first Christians, which, no doubt, were then held for greater security, and in after times on account of the solemnity of nightly meeting together. Afterwards the Church discontinued them.

15. We have here a confirmation of an opinion held by Christians, though not established as a doctrine, that each Christian has his guardian angel appointed him. St. Matt. xviii. 10 may be adduced in support of the belief, which has been that of many pious men, and certainly seems authorized by Scripture. A solemn and yet cheering thought, that to each of us God has appointed his angel to be an especial friend and guardian. How shall we cause him to grieve when we sin!

17. At that time there was only one James in the

Church at Jerusalem, James the younger, the son of Alphæus and Mary, the mother's sister of Jesus, who was also called the "brother of the Lord." The "other place" to which St. Peter went is not told us. Probably it was some other part of the city of Jerusalem, and not another town. Henceforth St. Peter disappears from the history of the Acts.

20. In contrast with the preservation of St. Peter, is now narrated the fearful death of Herod. An account is likewise given of this event by the historian Josephus, with the addition of this story,—that Herod, when the flatterers (the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon, as the Jews would scarcely so have spoken) cried out, "Be gracious to us, O King, we have hitherto honoured you as a man, now we must reverence you as something more than human," suddenly espied an owl sitting on the canopy over his head. This Herod regarded as an evil omen, forthwith he was seized with sickness, and died in excruciating torments. The truthful simplicity of St. Luke's account is very conspicuous, as compared with the artificial attempt at effect of the Jewish historian.

24. The power of the Church silently grew, while the splendour of King Herod had such a tragical end! The transition of subject in this verse is very striking.

25. They returned, that is, to Antioch : ch. xi. 27—30, xiii. 1. Here the sacred writer takes up the thread of the narrative which had been interrupted

by the episode, ver. 1—24. Barnabas and Saul had been sent by the Church at Antioch with the collection for them in Judæa, ch. xi. 30. In this interval happen the imprisonment of St. Peter and the death of Herod at Cæsarea, while Barnabas and Saul were on their journey to the other Churches in Judæa, before they arrived in Jerusalem, from whence, as the end of their journey, they returned to Antioch.

CHAP. XIII. 1. Although the Gospel had already spread from Jerusalem over Palestine, and beyond its boundaries, still the Church had not undertaken any direct missionary work. Circumstances, such as the persecution in the case of Stephen, had hitherto furthered the spread of Christianity. From Antioch first were teachers sent with the direct purpose of founding Churches in different places, (xiv. 23). As Jerusalem formed the centre mission point for the Jews, so did Antioch for the heathen. As regards St. Paul's first mission journey, it extended over Cyprus to some of the south-eastern provinces of Asia Minor. It was the first attempt to spread the Gospel beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land. If one considers what the attempt was, viz. for a few obscure persons to preach the doctrine of Christ crucified over an immense territory occupied by heathenism in its pomp and power, the undertaking seemed utterly hopeless and desperate, and the result is nothing less than miraculous. The remark of St. Augustine is literally true, that it required

greater credulity to believe that Christianity could be spread without miracles, than to believe miracles. The spread of the Gospel is itself the greatest of miracles. Of the persons mentioned in this Gospel, Simeon Niger is not further known; Lucius of Cyrene is mentioned Rom. xvi. 21; Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod (Antipas), is likewise unknown beyond this mention of him.

2. The word in the original for 'ministering' is that from which our word 'liturgy' is derived. The 'ministering' here signifies the service in the public worship. We observe here that without a special "mission" sending, even the Apostles St. Paul and St. Barnabas did not venture to undertake the conversion of the heathen.

4. They went first to Cyprus, the native place of Barnabas, as they would naturally find there the best entrance to their work. Salamis was on the east side of the island, from thence they travelled to Paphos on the west side, the well-known seat of the worship of Venus.

5. On the ground that the Gospel was first to be offered to the Jews, they preached in their synagogues. John, whom they had as their minister, assisted probably, among other services, in the administration of baptism.

8. This man was probably either an Arabian, or had acquired some learning of that country, as the name *Elymas*, by which he was called, signifies in Arabic 'a wise man.' Of the prevalence of

sorcery among the ancients, something has been already said in respect to Simon Magus. His object was, for his own selfish purposes, to keep the pro-consul under his influence, and therefore he opposed the preaching of the Gospel, by which that influence would have been destroyed.

9. The Apostle is here for the first time called by that name by which he is ever afterwards in the history designated, Paul. It was the opinion of the early writers of the Church that in consideration of the conversion of so important a person as the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, he ever afterwards bore his name.

11. "The judgment of blindness for a season," says St. Chrysostom, "is the word not of a punisher, but of a corrector; for if he had wished to punish, he would have inflicted blindness for ever, and not for a season." Whether Elymas ever repented and was converted, is not mentioned, though we may rather infer that he did, from this expression, "for a season." It is not said that Sergius Paulus was baptized, but that he believed. His baptism either at the time or subsequently, we must infer.

13. This was the first entrance of the Apostles upon an unknown country, and John Mark, it would seem, feared the dangers of the attempt. The motives which induced his return were unworthy ones, as we learn from ch. xv. 37; but he afterwards redeemed his temporary backsliding, was permitted to become the writer of one of the Gospels, and

founded one of the strictest and most important Churches of ancient times—the Church of Alexandria. From Perga, the metropolis of Pamphylia, the journey of the Apostles extends into the interior, to Antioch in Pisidia, on the borders of Phrygia.

15. It was customary in the synagogue worship to have chosen readings from the Old Testament; the first from the law, called the Parasche, and the other out of the Prophets, called the Hapthare.

16. The beginning of the address which, at their invitation, Paul makes to the Jews, is similar to that spoken by St. Stephen, ch. vii. It contains a very brief review of the history of the people, and of God's dealings with them. No subject is more pleasant to the Jew than the history of his own people.

18. There is another reading of this expression which is given in the marginal notes of some of our English Bibles. Instead of *etropophoresen* in the Greek, which means 'suffered their manners,' it might be *etrophophoresen*, (only the change of a single letter,) which means 'bore or fed them as a nurse beareth or feedeth her child,' (Deut. i. 31); according to the Septuagint version.

20. There is a difference between the period given by St. Paul and 1 Kings vi. 1, where 480 are reckoned to the building of the temple. But St. Paul does not profess, by his very way of speaking, to give the exact chronology. He says "about the

space," which very well conveys the indefiniteness intended by the Greek word.

23. St. Paul now proceeds further to mention the fulfilment of the prophecies in the sending of Christ and His forerunner John the Baptist. Christ is declared to be the promised Messiah, to Jews and *proselytes*, (ver. 26).

27. In this, says St. Chrysostom, St. Paul gives his hearers power to separate their case from that of those who in Jerusalem had killed the Lord. Although they thought that by putting Christ to a shameful death, they should root out the belief in Him, and shew that He could not be the promised Messiah, they have fulfilled by this act the very prophecies which spake concerning Him, and which they misunderstood, though read in their ears every sabbath day.

34. In confirmation of the resurrection of Christ, as a fact foretold by the prophets, St. Paul refers to Isaiah lv. 3, and adduces the promise of "the sure mercies of David" made to the Israelites. He leaves out the first part of the verse, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you," because this latter clause contained the main argument for the resurrection of which he was speaking. An everlasting kingdom had been promised to David, this could not be if the King, the Christ, were holden by death; and therefore the prophet, in promising "the sure mercies of David," indirectly declared that the Messiah, in whom are centred these mercies, shall live for

ever. But still further, another passage of Scripture directly confirms this indirect testimony of Isaiah, the same which was quoted by St. Peter, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."

36. "By the will of God" can, according to the Greek (construction), be joined either with what follows, viz. "he fell on sleep by the will of God;" or the passage may be rendered, "after he had in his own generation served the will of God:" the translation in the English Bible is, however, perhaps the preferable one.

40. By employing the plural, "by the prophets," as in St. Matt. ii. 23, we understand that the speaker is not quoting so much a particular passage with exactness, as expressing an oft-recurring thought of the prophets. The passage here is taken, with some slight variation, from Habakkuk i. 5.

47. St. Paul refers to Isaiah xlix. 6, and shews that the call of the Gentiles was no scheme of their own, but in accordance with God's plans as determined beforehand and declared by the prophets. The words are addressed to the servant of God, under which name is understood the promised Messiah.

48. No argument can be drawn from the expression, "as many as were ordained or appointed to eternal life, believed," in favour of the Calvinistic notion of absolute decrees. Individual choice is not excluded by God's foreknowledge, though how to

reconcile the certain truths of divine foreknowledge with human free-will, is beyond our present comprehension. In practice, indeed, there is no difficulty. We must all *act* as free agents, since we feel and know we are such, and without free-will could not be responsible agents at all. At the same time, we are certain God *must* see and know all things, future (to us) as well as present.

Why out of a multitude of men some reject the Gospel, others accept it, some professing Christians practically deny Christ, others seek to obey Him, we cannot say. But this rule may be drawn from Scripture, that the honest-minded, and those who obeyed conscience and the light already afforded them, were attracted by Christianity, "ordained to eternal life;" others, of a different character, rejected it. The doctrine of election is a scriptural doctrine, but it is not a doctrine which interferes with man's free-will, or teaches us that any are so chosen that they cannot fall from grace.

50. "The devout and honourable women" here spoken of were the female proselytes of rank, who were easily moved by zeal on behalf of the religion to which they had been converted. The word (*sebomenas*) used in the original, and translated 'devout,' is the same which is employed ver. 43, as applied to the proselytes, and designates converts to Judaism. Iconium lay on the borders of Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Pisidia.

52. What a simple but striking contrast does

this verse present to what had gone before! The Apostles were driven forth, and the Gospel rejected,—and what was the effect? To fill the disciples with joy and the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. XIV. 1. Iconium was the chief town of Lycaonia, in earlier times regarded as belonging to Phrygia. Its present name is Koniah, and it is the residence of a Turkish pasha.

9. As St. Matt. ix. 28. "The lame man heard Paul speak, perceived a wonderful divine power in his soul from the words which he heard, and concluded from thence that some especial gift for the healing of the body resided in those who so spake."—*Von Gerlach*.

11. These were of course the heathen inhabitants, who saw in the power exercised by these strangers something superhuman. Following the mythological notions which prevailed among the people, they took Paul and Barnabas for Jupiter and Mercury, who, they supposed, had once more come to visit men, as once before they were said to have visited Philemon and Baucis, inhabitants of this neighbourhood. (The story of Philemon and Baucis is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Met. viii. 611). This circumstance is interesting, as shewing that the belief in the old mythology still kept firmer hold on the people at large than perhaps we are disposed to imagine. We must remember that this event took place in a small, retired town, far away from the

enlightenment of the Roman civilization. The inhabitants of larger towns had lost all belief in paganism, but had nothing in its stead. The state of the educated classes was that of a dreary, hopeless unbelief, or atheism. And the question suggests itself, whether, as regards their conversion to Christianity, a people are in a more hopeful state who still cling to their old idolatry, or who, rejecting this, are in a state of scepticism as regards an unseen world. Perhaps the latter might be more hopeful *where* it is accompanied by a yearning after better things. Otherwise any belief is better than utter infidelity; and entire unbelief in a spiritual, unseen world, leaves the mind in the worst state for the reception of the Gospel.

13. There was a temple dedicated to Jupiter outside the city. It was a custom, as is well known, among the heathen to put 'garlands' on the head of the victims to be sacrificed.

15. "We have here," observes Grotius, "a remarkable speech, which may serve for an example of the manner in which missionaries should deal with people brought up in idolatry." St. Paul maintains that God at no time left Himself without witness, and that even in the darkest times of ignorance "that which may be known of God is manifest in them." Rom. i. 19, 20.

19. A notable instance of the changeable character of popular feeling! They who lately thought Paul and Barnabas to be gods, and would have

sacrificed to them because they had witnessed a wonderful miracle, are now, without any reason for thinking differently of them, persuaded to stone the Apostles. Such a change came upon the people in respect to our Lord Himself, and to His apostles in Jerusalem. And so it has been and ever will be. Popularity can never be a test of the truth or falsehood of anything which is taught. Truth is popular, but more frequently unpopular, without any apparent reason.

21. St. Luke merely mentions their revisiting these cities, Lystra and Iconium, from Derbe, without giving any particulars of their doings in this latter place. St. Paul employed himself in this second visit, not merely in confirming the disciples in the faith, but also in ordaining elders, or presbyters. From the expression used we are not led to suppose that the choice of these elders was allowed to the Churches themselves, but rather that the apostles selected those whom they thought fit. In later times the members of the Church had a voice in the appointment of their bishops. But many inconveniences were found to arise from this mode of election, and only in a very early state of the Church could it be practised without very mischievous effects. Possibly in a Church where strict discipline was exercised, such a state of things might be advantageous, or at least the clergy might be permitted to choose their own spiritual rulers. Attalia was a maritime town in Pamphylia, built by Attalus

Philadelphus, King of Pergamus. The Apostles returned to Antioch, as the mother Church of those parts. The apostolic mode of Christianizing countries was to select a centre, where a Church was established, and from this centre other Churches were founded round about. The period of the Apostles' sojourn in Antioch is given only in general terms,—they “abode long time.”

CHAP. XV. 1. We have in this chapter the account of the first Council of the Church. The subject of it was of the most pressing moment at the time. The question was to be decided, whether, and how far, the law of Moses was binding on heathens who became Christians. One strong party, consisting of the Pharisees, who had received the Gospel, and of other rigorous Jews, maintained that the heathen converts must be circumcised. On the point of observing the ritual law, Christ had given no decided directions, only certain intimations of what should take place in respect to it. (St. Matt. ix. 13—15.) St. Peter had by vision been instructed as to God's will in the matter of what he before considered “common and unclean.” But the converts from Judaism, at this time the larger number in the Church, could not understand how the heathen could be received into the kingdom of God except through the law. In order to estimate the importance of the question, we must try to place ourselves in the position of an earnest Israelite, to whose mind the abro-

gation of the law involved the denial of the inspired character of the Old Testament.

It was evidently of great importance to settle this question. Accordingly, the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. Although it is not expressly said that *all* the apostles then living were present, it is most probable they were so. The council held at Jerusalem may be regarded as the great example for all future Church councils; and the organization of every Church must be considered imperfect without such assembly to discuss and decide upon questions which may from time to time arise. The assembly at Jerusalem was a general Council of the whole Church to determine a most important point affecting the whole world. Such a question could only be determined in a general assembly, whereas the convocation of a single Church may decide questions of detail affecting its welfare. The point here discussed was afterwards the subject of controversy in some of the Churches. St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians has especial reference to it; he there refutes the errors of the Judaizers. Gal. ii. 1—10 should be compared with this narrative.

2. Who these "certain others" were is not expressly mentioned. We learn from Gal. ii. 1 that Titus accompanied the Apostle.

5. St. Paul and St. Barnabas had come up to Jerusalem expressly for the purpose of getting the question settled which had been raised in Antioch

by certain men from Judæa : they were the delegates from the Church at Antioch for the purpose. And it would appear that as soon as they reached Jerusalem, and had "declared all things that God had done unto them" in the conversion of the heathen, certain converts who had been Pharisees, and were more attached to the ritual observances of the law, arose, and repeated the very same thing which had brought them up from Antioch.

7. The "much disputing" were the preliminary debates in the council, before St. Peter rose and addressed the assembly. St. Peter took the lead in the discussion, both on account of the apostolical priority which is always allowed him, and likewise because he was the first converter of the Gentile, and could declare how it had come about that he was so, and what God had directly made known to him on the matter. In the "much disputing" might possibly the mention of the case of Titus (Gal. ii. 3) occur.

9. The heart is purified by the Holy Ghost, for the reception of Whom faith is required, and so the purifying is ascribed to it. St. Peter would by this expression correct the Jewish notion of everything heathen being unclean.

10. Since God had made His will known respecting the admission of the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Ghost, any addition of circumcision and other rites of the law would be a tempting of God,—asking His will twice when once made known to them, and so provoking Him to revoke His gracious purpose.

12. The effect of this address by St. Peter was that the whole multitude kept silence, so that no fresh disputing arose—a happy omen for the termination of the matter. St. Barnabas and St. Paul could now without opposition confirm what St. Peter had said by their own experience as apostles—Barnabas first, on account of his seniority and closer relation to the Church.

13. When these two had declared what God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, St. James, the brother of our Lord (ch. xii. 17) and first Bishop of Jerusalem, came forward to speak in the assembly. In addition to the weight which his words would have on account of the veneration in which he was held, his testimony was of the more force, inasmuch as he from birth, education, and disposition was strongly attached to the observances of Judaism.

16. The quotation in this and the following verse is from Amos ix. 11, 12, made from the Septuagint version, with which it agrees without any variation of importance. At first sight its aptness to the question under consideration is not very apparent,—the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel was not denied, only the possibility of admission except through Judaism; but from the *silence* of the prophet as to any such condition might be implied the admission of the Gentiles without undergoing circumcision, and without submission to the rites of the law. The Apostle, too, sees in the promise of the restitution of the tabernacle of David

a prediction of the establishment of a spiritual Israel, and of the restoration of David's line after a spiritual manner.

18. These are the words of the Apostle St. James himself. This admission of the Gentiles without first passing through Judaism was no new plan, but a scheme of the Almighty from the beginning.

20. Instead of imposing on the Gentiles the whole law, and therewith circumcision also, St. James commands for their observance only certain necessary and easy precepts, answering very much to those which were called the precepts of Noah, undertaken by the proselytes of the Gate. The object of this rule laid down by the Apostle was to pay some regard to the prejudices of the Jewish Christians, without interfering with the just liberty of the heathen Christians. As the distinction between Jew and Gentile diminished, the necessity for such observances would be felt to be less. By the pollution of idols we are to understand the meats sacrificed in the heathen temples, part of which fell to the share of the priests. Of such sacrificial feasts Christians are forbidden to partake. The distinction which St. Paul makes, 1 Cor. x. 25—29, between meats sold in the shambles, which *might* have been part of the sacrifices slain, and those which were known to be such, is not entered into here ; all participation in idolatrous worship, or countenance of such sacrifices, is forbidden, as being polluting. Such was held in abomination by the Jews. The same may be said

of eating of blood and of things strangled. There are such strong declarations on the subject, that the Jews held the eating of blood in utter abomination: see Levit. xvii. 10, 11. This prohibition has been considered by Christians as merely temporary, though in the Greek Church it was considered unlawful for a Christian to eat blood. It is expressly mentioned in a canon of a council of that Church held A.D. 692; and even in the middle ages a prejudice existed against the practice. It may appear extraordinary that among such things as these, which were but of temporary moment, (since, when idolatry was abolished, there could be no fear of the pollution of idols,) mention should be made of fornication,—a sin and pollution of such a different kind. Many attempts have been made to find a different reading of the word, but without foundation. In estimating the necessity of introducing the prohibition of this, among other things which were almost among those indifferent, we must remember the manner in which fornication was regarded by the heathen world,—hardly as a pollution at all; not as a sin or offence against the moral law, but as something lawful or indifferent. It was left to Christianity to introduce the true view of the pollution; the Gospel first taught purity. It was necessary, in framing regulations for the conduct of heathen converts, to name an offence which they were accustomed to regard so differently from the way in which the Gospel has taught us to view it.

21. Some ancient commentators have understood this to mean,—‘It is superfluous to exhort the Jewish Christians to keep these precepts just mentioned, since they hear Moses read every Sabbath-day in the synagogues.’ Others: ‘You Christian converts are to keep these commands enjoined above, since’ (‘for’ in the original) ‘the Jews hear Moses read to them in the synagogues every Sabbath-day, and cannot fail thereby to be reminded of your violation of his precepts, if you eat blood,’ &c. The first appears the better interpretation of the verse.

22. Judas Barsabas has been supposed by some to be a brother of Joseph Barsabas, (ch. i. 23); but nothing further is known of him than what we are here told. Silas, or Silvanus, is the companion of St. Paul mentioned in 2 Cor. i. 19, 1 Thess. i. 1.

23. From the fact that the letter was addressed not only to the Church in Antioch and Syria, (of which Antioch was the capital,) but also in Cilicia, we must conclude that the same errors respecting the position of Gentile Christians to Judaism prevailed there.

28. They appeal to the presence of the Holy Ghost among them, in which was fulfilled Christ’s promise, St. Matt. xviii. 20. The Apostles here make a distinction between the resolves of their own minds, and the Spirit of the Lord speaking and revealing Itself in them. The Holy Spirit guided and directed the minds of the writers of the Scriptures in such a way, that in all matters which relate

to religious truth they could not err. The Spirit inspiring them was something different from their own spirits, though acting in and through their own minds. . Compare Romans viii. 15, 16, 26, 27 ; also Exodus xiv. 31.

32. From this it appears that the office of prophet in the New Testament was not so much that of foretelling events, as of exhortation and instruction ; they were preachers of the word. In the Old Testament a great portion of the province of the prophet consisted in warning and preaching against the faults and sins of his day. After the fulfilment of their commission from the Church in Jerusalem, and the exhorting of the brethren, Joseph Barsabas returned to Jerusalem, but Silas attached himself to St. Paul as his companion.

36. The exact time which is meant by "some days," whether weeks or months, is left quite undetermined. St. Luke does not mention how long Barsabas remained in Antioch before he returned to Jerusalem, nor how long St. Paul remained there after his departure. The most probable supposition is that this second mission-journey commenced in the year 53. It seems to have originated merely in the wish to visit the Churches which they had founded. But it took a much wider circuit, and led the Apostles into Europe. In this entrance into Macedonia, St. Luke would have a personal interest as he joined St. Paul on the occasion as his companion, (ch. xvi. 10,) where in his narrative ' we' first

occurs in speaking of the Apostle's movement from place to place.

38. From the manner in which St. Paul views St. Mark's departure from them on the former occasion, we must conclude his motive was an unworthy one. Probably fear of the dangers and inconveniences of the proposed entrance on an unknown country was the cause. In the mode in which this sharp contention between two apostles is narrated, we see the openness (everywhere discernible in Scripture) with which the infirmities of good men are mentioned. But though the contention was sharp, it did not lead to any breach of friendship between the two Apostles. They could contend, and that sharply, with one another, without destroying charity, the bond of peace and of all virtues. At first sight we may think that St. Paul was somewhat harsh in visiting one fault so severely, and that St. Barnabas allowed himself to be unduly influenced by the feelings of relationship. But the behaviour of both was suited to the case, and calculated to restore St. Mark to a better mind. He needed the severe reproof and rejection of St. Paul to impress upon him the unworthiness of his former cowardice, and yet if St. Barnabas had refused likewise to accept of his companionship, he would be in danger of despair as to his future usefulness in the cause of the Gospel.

40. St. Paul chose Silas as his companion, and went by land through Syria and Cilicia, into the

interior of Asia Minor, to the Churches of Derbe and Lystra; St. Barnabas, on the other hand, to Cyprus. The Apostles separated, and by their separation carried the blessings of the Church into different countries.

CHAP. XVI. 1. It would appear from this, that Lystra was the birthplace of Timothy, more particularly as in the next verse he is said to be well reported of by them of Lystra and Iconium,—as though a person well known to its inhabitants from long residence. At chap. xx. 4 Timothy is mentioned again without the *nomen gentilitium*, as it is called,—the name of his tribe or country,—as if that had already been given.

Some commentators, indeed, have tried to affix the description, “of Derbe,” (*Derbaios*), to Timothy, rather than to Gaius, because in the preceding chapter, ver. 29, Gaius is said to be a Macedonian. But the construction does not allow of this, and we can only suppose that the Gaius spoken of in the twentieth chapter was a different person from the one named in chap. xix. 29; and this is very likely, since the name was a very common one.

As Timothy’s mother was a Jewess, and his father a Greek, (probably not a believer, if he were not dead, as some have thought,) the Jews claimed him as belonging to them. In his case, to avoid giving offence to the Jews, St. Paul caused him to be circumcised, whereas a Gentile from parents who were

both Gentiles could not, according to the decree of the Council at Jerusalem, be circumcised.

3. This was a very different case from that of Titus, spoken of in Gal. ii. 3. In this latter instance, it would have been a compromise of a principle, inasmuch as the Judaists sought to *compel* Titus, who was a Greek, to be circumcised. But with reference to Timothy, who was regarded as a Jew, and was willing to be circumcised, there was no undue concession. Circumcision and the rites of the law are not by this act of St. Paul's allowed to be necessary to salvation or beneficial to the Christian.

4. They delivered the decrees partly by word of mouth, and partly by a copy (perhaps) of the original document.

6. St. Luke does not give us the particulars of this mission-journey of the Apostles. The Church in Galatia was no doubt founded during this visit into that province. See also ch. xviii. 23. Asia cannot here be taken to mean the whole quarter of the globe so named in distinction from Europe, but proconsular Asia, with its metropolis, Ephesus, corresponding to ancient Ionia, as ch. ii. 9, vi. 9. Thither their journey was directed from Lycaonia, (Derbe and Lystra,) but was diverted (as they were hindered by the Spirit from going there) to Phrygia and Galatia.

8. They were now between Mysia and Bithynia. The Spirit did not suffer them to go into Bithynia, and in Mysia, as belonging to Asia, they might not

preach. In this position the West seemed pointed out as the scene of their labours. Accordingly they must proceed to the Asiatic coast, and went, therefore, direct westward to the southern boundary of Mysia, and so passing Mysia came to Troas on the Hellespont, there to decide on their further journey westward, or to await some especial direction from above, as they might expect such would be given them from what had taken place. This direction they received by means of a vision in the night, which appeared to St. Paul.

9. We cannot suppose this vision to have been merely a dream. It was a revelation of the Spirit to the mind and senses of the Apostle, known by him to be such, though in what way we are not told and cannot determine. That the person appearing was a man of Macedonia, St. Paul would learn from his own words. Here for the first time St. Luke uses the pronoun 'we,' and hence it is naturally inferred that he joined St. Paul at Troas.

11. Samothrace is an island off the coast of Thrace, in the Ægean sea. Neapolis, at an earlier period Datos, was a harbour on the Thymonian gulf, opposite the island Thasos.

12. Philippi, formerly called Krenides, ('the fountains,') was enlarged by Philip of Macedonia, and named after him. Under the dominion of the Romans, the Emperor Augustus caused a colony to be planted there, and bestowed upon it the civil privilege called *Jus Italicum*. Instead of "the chief city" of that

part of Macedonia, it would be more correctly translated "a first city," for Macedonia had been divided by Æmilius Paulus into four parts, each with a chief city, and Amphipolis, not Philippi, was the chief city of that part.

13. The river was the Strymon. The Jews usually built their places of assembly near rivers, for the convenience of water used in their numerous washings. The words in our version, "where prayer was wont to be made," might be rendered "where a *proseucha* (place of prayer) was accustomed to be." These *proseuchai* were found near towns where synagogues were not allowed to be built.

14. Purple dyeing was a trade very much carried on in Lydia, of which Thyatira was a town. This Lydia was a convert to Judaism, as the expression "which worshipped God" implies. The heart of this woman the Lord opened to receive the Gospel. This power of receiving and understanding must come of divine grace. As St. Chrysostom expresses it, "the opening of the heart came from God; the attending was of herself, so that the work was both of God and of man."

15. This place is frequently referred to as a witness in favour of infant baptism. In the family of Lydia, consisting probably of slaves and their families, there must have been children, and as no exception is made, we may conclude that childhood was no hindrance to the reception of this sacrament. But the practice of infant baptism does not require in its

support an argument such as this, which, it must be confessed, is not very conclusive. It is sufficient to know that infant baptism has always been the practice of the Church, inasmuch as no mention occurs of its introduction, nor any charge is made against it as being at any particular time an innovation. So great a change as this could not, however, take place without some notice, if the custom was entirely new. If the apostles, and those immediately after the apostles, *never* baptized infants, he or they who first did so could not have escaped animadversion. We may reasonably conclude that though (naturally) adult baptism was the rule, when nations were being converted to Christianity, yet infant baptism was not unknown or contrary to the received practice of the apostles.

16. The spirit of Python, or Apollo, as the Greeks supposed the gift of prophecy to proceed from him. Of the reality of these possessions spoken of in Scripture we can have no doubt. They were not the results of mere natural madness, but influences of malevolent spirits. Before the coming of Christ Satan possessed a power over men's souls and bodies of which he has since been deprived. And even to this day, in countries quite heathen, we have reason to suppose that there are demoniacal influences unknown in Christian lands. St. Paul does not here allow that there was such a being as Apollo, for he affirms the contrary 1 Cor. viii. 4, where he speaks of heathen deities as "nothing," but he teaches that

the reverence paid to these false gods was really offered to devils. There was no Apollo, or Jupiter, or Diana, but there were evil spirits who used these creations of the imagination as their instruments.

17. It may appear wonderful that the Pythoness should bear witness to the truth, but, as the result shews, the conduct of this soothsayer was really calculated to impede the progress of the Gospel, though it was overruled to the conversion of at least one family. If the Apostles had allowed this testimony to pass unchecked, then the enemies of the Gospel might object to it that its works were done by evil spirits, or had some connection with the workings of the heathen deities; if the Apostle exorcised the evil spirit, as was the case, then the heathen masters would be roused to persecution from the loss which they incurred.

19. They arrested Paul and Silas, as the two principal persons. St. Luke and St. Timothy were not taken with them. The rulers were the Prætors, for so were the colonial magistrates called.

21. The introduction of foreign religious customs in opposition to the religion of the country was a great crime among the Romans.

22. The magistrates *commanded* the clothes of the accused to be torn off. It was contrary to the habits of a Roman magistrate to have done this with their own hands, and of course it does not mean that the magistrates rent their own clothes, which the language of the original forbids us to suppose.

28. The rest of the prisoners had heard Paul and Silas praying and singing psalms, and so, when the earthquake took place, they were too much impressed with a feeling of awe to take advantage of what had occurred and to effect their escape. They remained, as the Apostles did, in their prison. The dead stillness which would occur after such an event would give the Apostles an opportunity of hearing what was taking place at some distance from the "inner prison." No doubt the jailor's exclamation might give some clue to his intention, which St. Paul prevents. The conduct of this heathen in the apprehension of danger, and that of the Apostles in prison, forms a striking contrast.

30. The salvation which the jailor sought was that which St. Paul preached. It cannot for a moment be supposed that the inquirer meant being saved from any earthly danger. The conduct of the Apostles in prison might have made a powerful impression on the jailor, which is wonderfully confirmed by the earthquake taking place. Although we are told nothing of this man's former history, we know that he must have been one whose heart God had opened for the reception of divine truth. An earthquake could make but a temporary impression on a man hardened in sin and prejudice, who hated the light because his deeds were evil.

33. Here is another instance of a whole household being baptized. What were the particulars of St. Paul's teaching we are not told, nor how much this

heathen jailor had learnt of the life of Christ. As he had lived far from the scene of transactions familiar to those residing in Judæa, it could not be much. But his heart was prepared for the reception of the good seed of "the Word of the Lord," and his hearing that night was to the conversion of himself and his whole house.

35. It is uncertain whether the Prætors sent to release Paul, because they had been alarmed by the earthquake, or because they were convinced of his innocence. However that may be, St. Paul, though he had borne his imprisonment patiently, asserted his rights as a citizen. In this he sets an example how it is quite lawful for a Christian to take advantage of all the protection which the laws of his country may afford him, while he could not offer any personal opposition even to an illegal sentence and violence. By the rights of his Roman citizenship he was exempt, according to the provision of a law called *Porcia lex*, from bodily chastisement. Cicero says, "Those words, and the declaration 'I am a Roman citizen,' has been a defence to many in the most distant parts of the world and among barbarians." How St. Paul obtained this privilege of Roman citizenship (we must consider Silas likewise to be included in the claim) is not mentioned. Tarsus, though "a free city," (*urbs libera*,) allowed, i.e. to govern itself by its own municipal laws, did not confer the right of citizenship, and as on another occasion (ch. xxii. 28) the Apostle asserts that he

was "free-born," we must conclude that this privilege had been conferred for some service performed by his father or other ancestor.

40. Before they depart from the city they enter into the house of Lydia, to comfort the disciples there assembled, that they might not waver in their Christian confession. Paul and Silas only appear to have left Philippi: Luke at least did not go with them, as the use of the third person instead of the first betokens. Whether Timothy remained behind is uncertain: he is not mentioned again until ch. xvii. 14, and might already have left Philippi. The character and conduct of the Church at Philippi was most comforting to the Apostle. See Phil. iv. 1.

CHAP. XVII. 1. Amphipolis was an Athenian colony, at that time the chief city of Macedonia Prima, surrounded by the river Strymon. To the south-west of it lay Apollonia, which belonged to the Macedonian province Mygdonia. This place is not to be confounded with the Apollonia in Macedonian Illyria. To the west of Apollonia lay Thessalonica, so called either by Cassander in honour of his wife Thessalonica, or by Philip in commemoration of the conquest of Thessaly. It was formerly called Therme ('warm'), on the Thermæan gulf; was the capital of the second district of Macedonia, the seat of a Roman governor, and a place of considerable trade. Its present name is Saloniki, still a populous town. The way in which in the original it is men-

tioned that this place possessed a synagogue, implies that in Philippi, Amphipolis, and Apollonia there were none. (The article is used in the Greek, *the* synagogue.)

2. The words "reasoned with them" imply that the discourses were of the nature of dialogues, which is not unlikely in the synagogues. Our blessed Lord so taught: St. John vi. 25—59; St. Matt. xii. 9; St. Luke iv. 16.

5. The persons here spoken of as inciting the tumult were the idlers and loungers in the market-place, (*agoraioi*) the common people, as we should call them, who met in the agora (the public place of resort) to gossip, and were ready to stir up or to join in any disturbance.

10. Berea was a town in the third district of Macedonia, to the south-west of Thessalonica. The persons spoken of as being "more noble," i. e. of a more truly liberal mind, were the Jews of the town, as in every place St. Paul first addressed himself to them. They inquired into the Scriptures to see if what was there predicted agreed with those things which Paul and Silas declared.

12. The honourable women which were Greeks consisted of those who were proselytes to Judaism, and also, no doubt, of others who were heathens. The former heard Christ preached in the synagogues, the latter would receive private instruction in the truths of the Gospel.

14. St. Paul was conducted by the brethren to the

sea, in order to escape the plots of the Jews. It is not said whether he proceeded to Athens by land or by sea, but from the omission of the names of any towns or places through which he passed, it is supposed that he sailed to Athens. Where Timothy, supposing he remained behind at Philippi, (xvi. 40,) joined Paul and Silas, is not told us. He, together with Silas, stayed at Berea after St. Paul had left, and joined Paul at Corinth, (xviii. 5).

18. The Epicureans taught that all things in the world were the result of chance; that the soul was material and mortal; that the gods were quite indifferent about man's welfare, felt neither anger nor favour towards mankind; that the highest good was pleasure, which consisted in perfect freedom from pain, anxiety, and passion; and that the best means of attaining this freedom for the wise man was by a virtuous life. The Stoics taught that the Universe was a living Being, whose soul was God, and whose body was nature; that the soul of a man was of like nature with the soul of the world and an emanation from it, still in its individual character perishable. The soul on death would be absorbed into that from whence it proceeded—the universal soul. They taught that the highest faculty was the reason; that virtue consisted in obedience to it; in this was man's chief good; everything else was indifferent. By the practice of this virtue the wise became the kings of the world, and this virtue they attained by their own will and strength. Both sects were equally

opposed to the principles of the Gospel, and represent the antagonists which religion always finds in self-indulgence and pride of intellect. The Epicureans, though they advocated morality and a virtuous life, did so because their opposites, vice and sensuality, in the long run were destructive of ease and pleasure. The Stoics maintained that man was all-sufficient for his own happiness if he would but obey his reason. There were other sects of philosophers among the Greeks, [as the Peripatetics, Academics,] but they stood more aloof from public affairs and social life than the two sects here mentioned. The word which is translated 'babbler,' (*spermologos*,) means literally 'a bird or crow who picks up seeds,' and so is applied to the vain chattering of a bird, and thus properly rendered in our version 'babbler.' It would seem as though these philosophers had (perhaps wilfully) misunderstood St. Paul to set forth not only Jesus as God, but likewise the resurrection (*anastasis*) as a deity likewise. The conduct of the Athenians is a proof, if any were needed, how foolishly educated and learned persons can judge about religion, when not actuated by an earnest love of the truth. "Fools make a mock at sin,"—and philosophers are but as fools when, as here, they apply mockery and ridicule to the things which concern religion.

19. The Areopagus, (Mars' Hill,) an eminence in Athens, to the west of the Acropolis, where the supreme court of judicature was held, and where also philosophers and statesmen met for discussion.

St. Paul was taken there, not for trial, but in order to hold a disputation.

21. The Athenians, the most cultivated people in the world, to whom the whole civilized world owes all its present cultivation, had degenerated into mere idle busybodies, who spent their time in useless speculations, and unprofitable discussion of public affairs in which they could take no active part.

22. In this address of St. Paul to the Athenians we have an example of the manner in which he became "to them that are without law, as without law, that he might gain them that are without law." He adapted his teaching to the circumstances of the Athenians, not rudely assailing their idolatry, but laying hold on the little truth which still existed among them, in order thereby to lead them on to an understanding and acceptance of God's revealed truth.

23. In the Greek it is, "to an unknown god." From historical sources we learn that there were altars of the gods called "the unknown," and of heroes. It was one of these, most probably, which St. Paul saw, and which had the inscription "To an unknown god." The origin of these altars is said to be as follows. On the occasion of a pestilence in Athens, the Athenians were told by the oracle that they must recall from Crete the celebrated poet Epimenides, who purified the city in the following way:—He brought black and white sheep to the top of the Areopagus and set them loose, and

wherever any of them lay down he commanded a sacrifice to be offered, and so the plague ceased. Hence in different parts of Athens were altars erected to unknown gods.

The very existence of such altars St. Paul uses as an evidence of a yearning to know Him Who to these Greeks was still unknown, and the Apostle takes occasion from this circumstance to declare Him to them Whom they ignorantly worshipped. To a people professedly desirous of knowledge, he offers to make known Him Whom, by their own confession, they knew not.

24. This first point of St. Paul's sermon to the Athenians goes beyond, not merely the common notions of the people, who ignorantly worshipped many gods, but also the ideas of the philosophers, who had no conception of one supreme Creator. The world was divided then, as it always must be where the Gospel is rejected or unknown, into the absurdities of atheism, which does not believe God at all, but supposes all things made by chance; polytheism, which makes many gods; or pantheism, which imagines that nature herself is one great deity. The Christian believes in the divine presence everywhere, while he has the comfortable assurance of that presence more immediately to himself in prayer and in the sacraments.

26. The Apostle here teaches the truth which was quite unknown to the heathen world, the descent of the whole of mankind from a single pair. All

physiological inquiries have confirmed this truth of revelation. See particularly Dr. Prichard on Man. At the same time, St. Paul would gently rebuke the vanity and folly of the Athenians, who boasted that they were Autochthones, i.e. persons whose origin was derived from the earth itself, not settlers in Attica from other countries. The Jews especially were despised by Greeks and Romans, and the Athenians might learn, from what is here said, that the Jews, while equal to them in descent, as all were made of one blood, were superior to them in religious knowledge. As God has determined for men the bounds of their habitation, we must infer the sinfulness of conquest. *Language* seems one of the indestructible marks by which these boundaries are determined.

27. The uncertainty of men seeking after God without a revelation is very strikingly depicted in the original words of this verse. They signify the uncertain groping and feeling of a blind person.

28. The words "for we are His offspring" are in the Greek the first part of an hexameter verse taken from Aratus, a Greek poet who was a native of Cilicia, even if he was not born in Tarsus, as some have thought. He lived in the third century B.C. The Apostle shews in this and in other places his acquaintance with the poetry and literature of the Greeks.

29. Here the Apostle uses a delicate appeal to the dignity and sense of propriety on which the Athe-

nians prided themselves. We ought not—it were unworthy of us who believe we are God's offspring—to think so unworthily of Him from whom we proceed, as to suppose that the Godhead is like silver and gold, &c.

32. Although St. Paul had not mentioned the name of Jesus, yet, as soon as the Athenians heard of the resurrection of the dead, they interrupted him with words of mockery; others, wearied of the subject it would seem, deferred their attention to another day, or perhaps looked forward to the recreation of another discussion on the subject. They were not permitted to hear the Apostle again on this matter: they rejected the opportunity then given them.

34. Few out of this learned city believed. The learning and intellect of the Athenians was not the hindrance, (as others, as learned as they, did believe,) but in themselves learning and intellect did not lead them to the truth. The honest and good heart was wanting. This Dionysius the Areopagite is said to have been the first bishop in Athens. (Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, iii. 4, iv. 23.) He is stated to have suffered martyrdom there. It has been supposed, though without sufficient evidence, that Damaris was the wife of Dionysius.

CHAP. XVIII. 1. From Athens Paul journeyed to Corinth, a great and flourishing commercial city of Achaia, which about one hundred years after its

first overthrow had been rebuilt by Cæsar. The town was situated on the coast of two bays. The inhabitants were celebrated for their acquirements in science, as well as distinguished by their luxurious and sensual manner of living. The two Epistles written to the Church in this place make frequent reference to these two things—their pride of learning and their lax habits of morality. Among them was committed “such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” 1 Cor. v. 1.

2. Here St. Paul met with a Jew from Pontus in Asia Minor, who bore the Roman name Aquila, together with his wife Priscilla. They had formerly lived in Rome, but were driven thence by the edict passed by Claudius against the Jews. They took up their abode in Corinth. Whether Priscilla (the diminutive for Prisca, 2 Tim. iv. 19) was a Jewess by birth, or a Roman, is uncertain. As nothing is said of their conversion to Christianity by St. Paul, most probably they had received the Gospel in Rome. Possibly the first small Church in Rome might be dispersed through this edict of Claudius, and the Jews (who were not distinguished by the heathen from the Christians) only gradually allowed to re-assemble in Rome. This expulsion of the Jews is mentioned by Suetonius, a Roman historian. It took place about the year 54.

3. The tents were made of goats’ hair, and very much used in travelling, so that there was a great

demand for them. It was the custom of every Jew, even of the higher ranks, to learn some mechanical trade, and there was a saying among them to the effect that any one who had not learnt so to employ his hands was likely to be a thief. It has been thought that Aquila had a warehouse or manufactory for these tents in Corinth. 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

7. As in other places, so here, St. Paul gave to the Jews first the opportunity of hearing and receiving the Gospel, and when they rejected it, he turned to the Gentiles. He left the synagogue and entered into an adjoining house which belonged to a proselyte, ("one that worshipped God"). As the house of such an one was open to Jews and Gentiles, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was among Paul's hearers, and converted to the Gospel. We find from 1 Cor. i. 14 that the Apostle baptized him with his own hands.

9. St. Paul speaks of appearances in vision in full, 2 Cor. xii. 1. He remained a year and a half in this populous, busy city, and the Church obtained a firm footing in the place. In this stronghold of Satan was a citadel of Christ raised, against which the gates of hell could not prevail.

12. Gallio (Junius Annæus), the Roman proconsul of the province of Achaia, was brother of the philosopher Seneca. His former name was Marcus Annæus Novatus, but he received the name of Gallio on his adoption into the family of the rhetorician L. Junius Gallio. His brother Seneca dedicated to

him his book "On Anger." Both brothers were executed, though not at the same time, by command of the Emperor Nero. The character of Gallio was highly esteemed by his fellow-countrymen. On this occasion he exhibited what would be termed by men of the world philosophic indifference to religious disputes. But he was guilty of a dereliction of duty, as a misdemeanour was committed before his face, which a just impartial judge was bound to take notice of.

17. This Sosthenes can scarcely be the person mentioned 1 Cor. i. 1. It would appear that he had been chosen by the unbelieving Jews to be the successor of Crispus as chief of the synagogue. And as it is said *the Greeks* took him and beat him before the judgment-seat, we must suppose that in the confusion the Greeks took part *against* the Jews, not finding the governor favourable to their cause, and maltreated Sosthenes, who had been the spokesman of the Jewish party. It *may* indeed be that Sosthenes was afterwards converted to Christianity, and so is the same person named 1 Cor. i. 1; but he was not now beaten because he favoured St. Paul, but because the accusation of the Jews and the members of their synagogue was treated with contempt.

18. The Apostle was enabled to remain in Corinth for some time undisturbed, and at length left it of his own free will. St. Paul took ship in Cenchrea, which was the port lying on the Asiatic side of

the city; that lying on the Italian side was called Lechæon. In Corinth St. Paul wrote his Epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Romans.

The *person* who shaved his head in Cenchrea, in consequence of a vow, has been much disputed. Some modern commentators have referred it to Aquila, from the notion that such conduct would be inconsistent in St. Paul, but was not so in Aquila, who was less freed from the prejudices of his Jewish education: and certainly the construction *will* admit of its being referred to Aquila. But the more natural mode of construction is to apply the words "having shorn his head" to St. Paul himself.

We must recollect, that although the Apostle maintained the indifference of Jewish rites and ceremonies in themselves now that the reality was come, and did not allow of their being imposed on the heathen, as though necessary to salvation, yet in the case of those born Jews they were allowable, and in the case of some might be useful and edifying. The vow here spoken of was a species of Nazarite vow, undertaken in consequence of preservation from some imminent danger. The person who made the vow had his hair shorn, and then after an interval offered a sacrifice. It is possible St. Paul undertook a vow of this kind, because he was going among Jews, and desired in all lawful ways to conciliate them.

21. This feast is supposed to have been that of Pentecost, but as there are no grounds by which we

can quite certainly determine the time of year when St. Paul made this journey to Jerusalem, this point must remain uncertain.

22. This was the fourth journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. From Ephesus he sailed to Cæsarea, the best and most frequented port in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. From Cæsarea "having gone up," viz., to Jerusalem, and having spent a short time there, and saluted the Church, he went down to Antioch, and from thence visited the Churches of Galatia and Phrygia in order.

24. Apollos is the abbreviated form for Apollonius; as Epaphras for Epaphroditus, Silas for Silvanus. He was, it seems, a disciple of St. John Baptist, who had been instructed as to Christ being the promised Messiah, but as yet knew nothing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It is evident from ver. 25 that he knew who Christ was, but he had not as yet a perfect knowledge of the way of God. And we must conclude that he afterwards received Christian baptism, like the disciples of John Baptist spoken of ch. xix. 5, although the mention of the fact is omitted. A parallel case with the teaching of Apollos before he himself was more perfectly instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, would be the fervent preaching of a missionary who had been partly taught in the truths of the Gospel. Such an one might teach diligently the things of the Lord so far as he knew them. But such a supposed missionary would act *unlike* Apollos, if, when an opportunity of learning

the way more perfectly should be offered, he should reject it.

28. Compare with what is here said of Apollos, 1 Cor. iii. 6.

CHAP. XIX. 1. The "upper coasts" signify the countries spoken of ch. xviii. 23. During this stay at Ephesus St. Paul probably wrote his Epistle to the Galatians and the First to the Corinthians. The "certain disciples" spoken of were former disciples of St. John Baptist, who, like Apollos, had gained some knowledge of Christ's person and office, but were imperfectly instructed in the Gospel, and had not received Christian baptism. These men St. Paul took and caused to be baptized in the way Christ appointed. It is said they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus to distinguish Christian baptism from the water baptism of St. John Baptist; but we can have no doubt that on all occasions the formula appointed by Christ, St. Matt. xxviii. 19, was used. To be baptized in the name of one Person in the blessed Trinity implies that they were baptized in the name of all the Persons. It appears remarkable that these disciples of St. John Baptist affirmed they had never heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, when the Spirit is mentioned so frequently in the Old Testament. But the relation of the Holy Spirit to us, His office, they could not learn from the Old Testament. As a distinct Person, they did not know whether there be any Holy Ghost.

4. The distinction between John's baptism and Christian baptism is here plainly set forth. The one was outward, water baptism, in the faith of One to come; the other was in the name of the blessed Trinity, real, regenerating, accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

6. The laying on of hands, which was afterwards practised in the Church, and which now continues under the name of confirmation, followed in this case immediately after baptism. So it did in the early Church, until the practice of infant baptism becoming general, confirmation, the completion of baptism, was separated from it by some time. It would seem that the English Church supposed an earlier period for receiving this rite than the age at which persons are usually brought to confirmation, at fourteen or fifteen.

9. The Tyrannus in whose school St. Paul daily disputed was most probably a heathen rhetorician who had been converted to the Gospel. These rhetoricians were professors of the art of speaking, and gave lectures and instructions in large rooms, to which their pupils resorted to hear them and to practise themselves. In a school of this kind St. Paul taught those who came to him, Jews and Greeks.

10. The three months mentioned ver. 8 are to be added to the two years, so that the whole time of St. Paul's residence was between two and three years; stated, ch. xx. 31, in round numbers, at three years.

As Ephesus was a flourishing commercial city, strangers from all parts of Asia Minor were in the habit of flocking thither for the purposes of trade. The distinction which the Apostle gained in the town incited many to go to hear him. Under the term Greeks are included both proselytes of the gate and heathens. As St. Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus, the latter would have free admittance to hear him, which would not have been the case in a Jewish public synagogue.

11. No miracles are recorded as having been wrought in Corinth, but in Ephesus "special miracles." We may reverently suggest that the Providence of God so ordered the matter, that among a people acute and intellectual, like the Greeks, argument and declaration of the truth were employed; in Ephesus the appeal was made rather to their senses than their reason. This city was a great seat of magical and curious arts, in opposition to which are placed before the people the actual wonders of Divine power.

12. Compare St. Matt. ix. 20, &c.

13. These Jews supposed that St. Paul was in possession of some magical word, which enabled him to work these miracles. Having heard that he preached Jesus, they concluded this was the word in which the magical influence resided.

14. This Scæva was either the head of one of the twenty-four priestly classes, or one who had been himself a high-priest.

16. By this result of the attempt of the seven sons of Sceva, the Ephesians learn that the miracles were not for the purpose of creating wonder, but in order to gain men's minds to attend to the things spoken by Paul, that thus the name of the Lord Jesus might be magnified.

19. Ephesus was a great resort of magicians and sorcerers; the "Ephesian writings" were celebrated books of magic in ancient times which were very highly prized. The worship of Diana of the Ephesians was celebrated with many mysterious rites and curious magical arts practised by the priests. The 50,000 pieces of silver at which these books were valued is about £1,500* of our money. In considering the estimated value of these books, we must take into account the far higher price which in ancient times, and before the invention of printing, all books fetched, and also the exaggerated worth these goëtai (conjurers) attached to them.

21. After these events St. Paul determined, as the Church appeared sufficiently established in Ephesus, to visit the Churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and to go to Rome. In all such important decisions the Apostles were directly guided by the Holy Ghost. In what way his purpose to preach the Gospel in Rome (Rom. i. 15) should be carried out, St. Paul could

* The word "pieces" is not in the original. Hammond and some others supply "shekels," which would give a much less sum, about £450 or £500 of our money. Most modern commentators supply "drachmas," which is about the sum given above.

not as yet conjecture; the object of his journey to Jerusalem is known from 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. viii.; Rom. xv. 28. Another Erastus is mentioned (Rom. xvi. 23), who was resident at Corinth. The one spoken of here is named also in 2 Tim. iv. 20.

24. The silver shrines were small silver models of the temple of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus, which were bought by travellers and pilgrims as mementoes of the place.

29. The excited multitude rush into the theatre (a large building open overhead), as this was the usual place for all public assemblies. They drag with them two of St. Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, both of Macedonia; Paul would have gone down to appease the multitude, but was hindered by the disciples. The Gaius here mentioned cannot be the same with the one spoken of ch. xx. 4, and Rom. xvi. 23.

31. St. Paul's influence in the city may be gathered from this circumstance, that certain of the chief of Asia, the Asiarchs, were his friends; the Asiarchs were always the richest and most distinguished men in the town. Their office, which was annual, had reference to the religious festivals and buildings, of which they had the oversight. They were obliged to celebrate the public games at their own expense. Other Asiatic towns besides Ephesus elected Asiarchs, and these combined formed a college. The head of this college appears to have been chosen from the metropolis, and the years were

dated after him, as at Rome they were after the consuls.

33. The Jews put Alexander forward, who was himself a Jew, probably with the intention of throwing the blame of the uproar from themselves upon the Christians; the Jews were known to be idolaters, and therefore liable to the suspicion of despising the temple of the great goddess Diana. Some have thought that this Alexander was the same person as the Alexander mentioned 2 Tim. iv. 14.

35. The town-clerk was an officer of considerable importance; it would be more correctly translated 'scribe,' or 'secretary;' he had the oversight of the archives of the town or state, and prepared official writings. It was commonly said of any celebrated idol-image among the heathen, that it had fallen from heaven; probably the origin of the fable is to be traced to the worship in the first instance of aërolites. The stone which the Romans brought from Asia to Rome as the image of Cybele, is said to have been a meteoric stone.

40. The town-clerk with great worldly wisdom appeals to their selfish fears. The Romans were likely to call them to account for the present disturbance, and the loss by fine and confiscation would be heavier than the injury which they dreaded to their craft from the preaching of the Apostle.

CHAP. XX. 1. The departure of St. Paul from Ephesus followed soon after the tumult raised by

Demetrius; it was, however, not immediately caused by it, as we read "after the uproar was ceased," from which we may conclude that the Apostle might have remained in Ephesus, if he had wished. The Apostle goes first to Macedonia, (by Troas, where he wished to wait for Titus, who was to bring him tidings from Corinth, and of the reception his first Epistle to that Church had met with, 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13). From Macedonia he writes the second Epistle to the Corinthians. The narrative does not inform us how long St. Paul remained in Troas and Macedonia. If he spent the feast of Pentecost at Ephesus, of the year 59, probably the time until the winter was taken up in his journey to Corinth, as he is said, ver. 3, to have passed three months there; and shortly after (ver. 6) mention is made of the feast of the Passover of the year 60.

4. With the exception of the short separation from Philippi to Troas. Sopater of Beroëa, probably the same as Sosipater (Rom. xvi. 21). Nothing further is known of him. The other companions were two Thessalonians, Aristarchus (ch. xix. 29), and Secundus, altogether unmentioned except here; Gaius of Derbe (not the same as the Macedonian of that name, ch. xix. 29, as Derbe was in Lycaonia), and Timothy, whose birth-place, as already known, ch. xvi. 1, is not mentioned here; and, moreover, two natives of Asia Minor, Tychicus (Ephes. vi. 21) and Trophimus (ch. xxi. 29; 2 Tim. iv. 20).

6. St. Luke had been left behind at Philippi,

ch. xvi. 40, and now joins St. Paul; he again uses the first person in the narrative.

7. The notice in this verse is very interesting, as affording a testimony to the use in the Apostolic age of the Lord's day, the first day of the week, as the day of public worship, for the celebrating the Holy Communion, and preaching God's Word. We have likewise an example of the meetings of Christians by night.

9. The windows in the East were without glass, and for the most part without blinds.

10. The preceding verse tells us that Eutychus was taken up *dead*, not *as* dead, i. e. appearing dead but not really so. We must conclude from St. Paul's words that life was ebbing, though not quite extinct, but so that, unless recalled by the exertion of that miraculous power with which St. Paul was gifted, no earthly means could have brought him to life. The breaking of bread in the next verse refers to the partaking of the agape, eaten before the Holy Communion, and to the receiving of the Eucharist itself. The miracle here narrated was of great moment as respects the Church in Philippi. "The converts from heathenism were not free from the influence of their former superstitions, and would have regarded the death of Eutychus during St. Paul's preaching, and on the eve of his departure, as a bad omen; on the other hand, his restoration to life was the strongest possible evidence in favour of the Gospel which St. Paul preached."—*Von Gerlach*.

13. *We*, without St. Paul. Assos was a town on the coast of Mysia, south of Troas, opposite Lesbos.

14. Mitylene was the beautiful capital of Lesbos, situated on the east coast; Trogyllium a town and mountainous range on the Ionian coast, opposite Samos.

16. His connection with Ephesus was too close an one to allow of his making only a short stay there; he determined, therefore, to pass by it in his ship, (which appears to have been altogether under his control, probably one hired for the voyage,) and to call together the Ephesian presbyters, not in Trogyllium, which was very adjacent, but at Miletus, situated some distance from Ephesus.

18. This address of St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus is remarkable, not only because it sets before us the Apostle's deep love towards his spiritual children, and his earnest care for their welfare, but likewise as opening to us a prophetic view of the future state of the Church there. St. Paul speaks of the dangers which threatened it from false teachers, and warns against them. How much these fears of the great Apostle were justified, we learn from his first Epistle to Timothy, where he teaches his disciple what measures he must take to repress the false doctrine which had already broken out there. The Epistles of St. John tell us of the same fact. The Gospel and Epistles of that Apostle were written in Ephesus, and they are directed against the false teachers whom St. Paul combated. It has been thought by

some writers, ancient and modern, (among the former by Irenæus,) that St. Paul convened in Miletus a council of many of the neighbouring Churches, and not of the Ephesian elders only.

25. St. Paul believed from the witness he had received from the Holy Spirit, of bonds and afflictions awaiting him, that he should never again be permitted to see the Ephesian elders. As, however, he was freed from the first imprisonment in Rome, it is most probable that he again visited Ephesus; we cannot therefore understand the Apostle to express knowledge derived from a divine revelation, such as was the certain knowledge with which he spoke of the dangers threatening the Church; but we must regard him as declaring his own conviction, of what, according to all probability, would take place, unless indeed it should be overruled by God's direction to be otherwise. How it is that God is moved by prayer to change His purpose must remain a mystery to us; but knowing, as we do from His Word, that He hears and answers prayer, we may well suppose that the different issue of his journey to Jerusalem from what the Apostle had looked for, might have been the result of earnest prayer made to God of the Church for him. That St. Paul was subjected to a second imprisonment, and did not suffer martyrdom in his first, can scarcely admit of reasonable doubt.

28. The exhortation to the elders is made more emphatic by what has gone before. St. Paul declares

he was pure from the blood of all men, as he had not hesitated to set before them the whole Gospel truth. The Ephesian elders must take heed now to themselves, as the blame must lie on them. The verse sets before us some very important points: 1. The appointment of ministers in the Church is from the Holy Ghost; 2. Yet Christ appoints them; 3. Through the hands of others, as in the case here by St. Paul; 4. Different orders in the ministry; 5. Presbyters are called here bishops, overseers, *episcopoi*, yet the distinct office of the bishop at Ephesus belonged, as we know, to Timothy; 6. Their office to feed the Church of God; 7. It is said that God purchased the Church by His own blood, a witness to the divinity of the Son, as what goes before to the equality of the Son and Holy Ghost.

29, 30. The grievous wolves represent the persecutors and false teachers from among the Jews and the heathen. But worse than these were to be dreaded, the heretics and schismatics among themselves, who soon made their appearance: Col. ii. 8; see also the Epistles to Timothy. A notable mark of false and schismatic teachers of all ages is given us here; they shall "draw disciples *after them*." A true and faithful minister of Christ will forget himself, and turn men's thoughts to his Master only; the mark of sectarianism is, to be called after men's names: the one will seek to exalt Christ and His Church, the other their party and themselves.

31. Compare ch. xix. 10. St. Paul was in Proconsular Asia two years and three months. He speaks here in round numbers, as it is called.

35. St. Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that he has had no selfish ends in view in what he has done. It was quite lawful for him, as for the others who preached the Gospel, to live of the Gospel; but in order to stop the mouths of evil-disposed men, he preferred to labour with his own hands for his support. And in doing this he had set an example, which they would do well to follow, that "so labouring, they should support the weak." Some have understood this to mean, that the Ephesian presbyters ought, by so labouring, to pay regard to the scruples of the weak in faith, who were inclined to take offence at an apostle or teacher of religion who was supported by the Church. But what goes before, and what follows, shews us that the meaning rather is, that they should, after his example, help towards the support, not of themselves only, but of others less able than themselves. The force of the Lord's words is, indeed, not confined to giving of our substance, though it applies to that in a very great degree, but extends to every kind of giving. "The words of the Lord Jesus" do not occur in any of the Gospels, but were received by St. Paul from the tradition of the Church.

36. An instance of *posture* in prayer, in which the example of an Apostle, as of our Master Himself, should never be forgotten. The mutual affection of

the Apostle and the presbyters and people is described in a manner of touching simplicity, to which no reader of the narrative can be insensible.

CHAP. XXI. 1. The words "after we were gotten from them," hardly express the force of the original, which rather signify, "after we had been torn from them," indicating the severe wrench which separation caused. Coos was a small island in the Egean sea, opposite the towns Cnidus and Halicarnassus, on the coast of Asia Minor. It was celebrated for its cultivation of the vine and preparation of valuable cloths. Patara was a seaport of Lycia.

4. The disciples here, it would seem, were few, and easily found out. They knew, from the gift of prophecy by the Spirit, that danger awaited St. Paul at Jerusalem, and therefore said to him that he should not go up thither. But the Apostle himself went up to Jerusalem "bound in the Spirit," (ch. xx. 22): knowing, indeed, that bonds and imprisonment awaited him, but obeying the spiritual influence which directed him thither.

7. Ptolemais was situated where the modern St. Jean d'Acre is; it is a town on the Mediterranean, anciently called Accho, belonging to the tribe of Asher, but not subdued by the Israelites. (Judges i. 31.)

8. The Philip here spoken of is evidently the deacon, (ch. vi. 4,) as he is expressly called "one of the seven," about whom we read ch. viii. Eusebius,

E. H., b. iii. c. 31, speaks of the Apostle Philip as dying at Hierapolis, and being the father of two daughters of a great age, and of a third besides, who is supposed to have been married: hence it has been thought that the ecclesiastical historian confounded the two persons,—Philip the Apostle and Philip the Deacon. But this supposition is not necessary, since clearly Philip the Apostle might be the father of three daughters, and Philip the Deacon of four who prophesied, without any necessity for the same person being spoken of in both cases. We have in the Old Testament instances in Miriam and Deborah, of women possessing the gift of prophecy, and in Joel ii. 28 a direct prediction that in Gospel times this gift of the Spirit should be poured upon the daughters. There is no mention of their speaking in the public assembly of Christians, and of course this could not be done by any: (1 Cor. xiv. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 12).

10. The same Agabus mentioned ch. ii. 28. The use of symbolical actions in imparting prophecy was practised also by the prophets of the Old Testament; see Isaiah xx.; Jer. xiii.; Ezek. iv.

15. The words rendered, “we took up our carriages,” more properly mean, “we prepared and took up our baggage.”

16. Of Mnason nothing further is known; the name is Greek, and probably he was, if not a gentile Christian, at least an Hellenist. He was an old disciple, as contradistinguished from a neophyte, 1 Tim. iii. 6; but we have no information whether

he was converted to the Gospel on the day of Pentecost, or by his fellow-countryman Barnabas, or in some other way.

18. This James was the brother of our Lord, ch. xii. 17. Neither St. Peter or any of the other Apostles were at that time in Jerusalem, or (most probably) they would have been mentioned by name. From the fact that the early Christians agreed in naming this St. James, and afterwards his brother Simon, (St. Matth. xiii. 55,) as Bishops of Jerusalem, we have the clearest evidence that episcopacy dates from the Apostles' days. In this verse we have mention of James (the Bishop) and the elders, i. e. presbyters, the second order in the ministry. These latter composed his council.

21. The notion these Jewish Christians had of St. Paul's teaching was a mistaken one; he taught that circumcision and the customs of the law were not *necessary* unto salvation for any, Jews or Gentiles, but he did not *forbid* the former to circumcise their children, while with respect to the heathen he maintained that none of these things ought to be imposed upon them, since they need not pass through Judaism to Christianity. As he allowed others who were born Jews to observe Jewish customs, (so long as they did not attach to them any efficacy or merit in attaining God's favour,) in like manner it was permissible for him to conform to a Jewish custom which did not contradict the principles of the Gospel.

24. It was regarded as a mark of charity for the richer to undertake the costs of the sacrifice offered by the poorer Jews who were under Nazarite vows.

25. "This act of yours will not interfere with the liberty of the Gentile Christians, which is already secured by our decree," (ch. xv.)

26. A Nazarite vow, which was not for life, lasted at least thirty days. There were seven days still to elapse when St. Paul joined himself to the vow they had undertaken. This was only allowable in the case when the person so joining himself undertook the costs for the rest. He entered into the temple to give notice to the priests when the time would be completed, (viz. in seven days,) in order that, after they were fulfilled, the appointed sacrifice might be without delay offered. This conduct of St. Paul would declare in the most public way that he shewed no contempt for the customs of his fathers; the event, however, proves that his factious adversaries were not to be pacified by any concessions he could make.

28. The charge made against St. Paul must mean that he had brought Greeks into the court of the Israelites, since it would have been lawful for them to enter the court of the Gentiles. The charge was made on mere suspicion, since they had seen in his company Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they knew, or supposed to be, a Gentile.

30. They drew him out of the temple in order

that it might not be defiled by the shedding of blood, as there is no reason to doubt that the purpose of the Jews was to put St. Paul to death. A Roman garrison was placed in Antonia, a fort overlooking the temple, from which soldiers were despatched in time to save the Apostle from the hands of his enemies.

38. The Egyptian for whom the Roman officer takes Paul was a fanatic who, in the reign of Nero, excited a rebellion against the Roman authority. He collected a band of followers in the wilderness, led them to the Mount of Olives, in order from thence to make an assault on the walls of the city. He was routed by the procurator Felix, and had taken to flight; hence Lycias thought that perhaps the Egyptian rebel had returned, and fallen into the hands of the people. We learn from Tacitus that under the government of Felix, Judæa was infested by hordes of bandits.

40. The governor Lysias, it would seem, was quite convinced by St. Paul's answer that he could not be the Egyptian he had supposed, and so gave him permission to speak to the people. The Apostle, in order to soothe their minds as much as possible, makes use of the vernacular language, Hebrew, or Syro-Chaldaic, though he would have been understood by most of those in Jerusalem if he had spoken Greek.

CHAP. XXII. 1. St. Paul hoped, by the narrative

of the way in which he had been brought to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, to make an impression on his adversaries. He shews that in knowledge of the law and zeal for it, he was not surpassed by any of his equals in his own nation. This part of his address to the Jews was no doubt only preliminary to his description of the effects of the Gospel on the Gentiles; but the Jews do not allow him to proceed so far. As soon as he made mention of his being sent to the Gentiles, they seized upon this as a confirmation of their accusation and suspicions, interrupted his address to them, and demanded his life from the Roman captain. We gather from his mode of addressing them, that in the mob of St. Paul's persecutors were the elders of the people.

3. Being brought up at the feet of a Rabbi is a Jewish form of speech for having attended the teaching of such an one. It was customary for the scholars to sit on the earth, or on low benches, below the chair or pulpit of the teacher.

9. See chap. ix. 7. They heard a voice, but not of Him that spake to Saul; they could not distinguish His words.

12. Of his wonderful conversion St. Paul adduces, for the satisfaction of the Jews, a second witness. The high-priest and elders could declare to the truth of what he was stating, and also Ananias, a man known probably to some who heard him as a devout observer of the law.

16. A positive assurance of the "remission of sins" in baptism. Compare 1 Cor. vi. 11.

17. This supplies what was omitted in the history, chap. ix. 26.

19. The Apostle supposed that the fact of his former zeal for the law would be to the minds of the Jews a testimony of the strongest kind for the sincerity of his present change. But they had hardened their hearts, and would not listen to the most convincing proofs, as the sequel presently shewed.

22. As the address of St. Stephen had been stopped by the tumultuous fury of the people, who refused to hear him any further, so was St. Paul's; the throwing up of dust into the air was a mark that the accused had spoken evil against the law, and was not any more to be heard; the casting off of their clothes was in preparation to stone St. Paul, as had been done to St. Stephen, not by way of judicial sentence, but as an act of the popular tumult.

24. To the tribune of the Roman soldiers, (the captain or commander of a thousand men,) it seemed as though St. Paul had rather increased than diminished the disturbance by the address which he had been permitted to make. Possibly he had not understood the whole of what St. Paul had said, and therefore wished to extract by scourging the reason why they were so infuriated against him. The conduct, however, of the captain was contrary to the

Roman law, to begin his inquiry by punishment, especially as the accused was not a slave.

25. The persons to be scourged were bound to a stake. Against the injustice of the captain St. Paul appeals to his rights as a Roman citizen; two violations of these were about to be committed,—scourging, and this without previous trial.

27. The chief captain had bought his right of citizenship; he knew Tarsus was not a city which enjoyed the privilege of Roman citizenship, and the prisoner appeared too poor to have purchased it, hence his surprise. As has been observed before, St. Paul inherited this advantage for some benefit conferred on the state by his father or other ancestor.

30. Although the chief captain had reason to be afraid in consequence of his violation of the rights of a Roman citizen, he did not choose at once to display his fears. He kept St. Paul bound until the morrow, not willing to exhibit any concession to a despised Jew, and it was only on the morrow, when he brought him before the council, that he loosed him of his bonds.

CHAP. XXIII. 1. St. Paul begins his address to the Sanhedrim, looking on them with an open, steadfast countenance, as the word properly means (*atenisas*); he declares that he has lived as a good citizen, with a scrupulous conscience, up to that very day. His words, doubtless, more immediately refer to his

conduct since his conversion, and declare that he has not been guilty of any crime against the law for which he could justly be accused before the council; and even before his conversion, though he sinned in his cruel persecution of the Christians, yet he had been scrupulous to regulate his life after the strictest sect of the Pharisees. The words, "I have lived in all good conscience," rather mean in respect to such offences of which the tribunal before which he then stood could take cognizance.

2. Ananias, the son of Nebedæus, was the high-priest at that time in discharge of the duties of the office. He has been sent to Rome by Quadratus, the predecessor of Felix in the government of Judæa, to answer before the emperor charges made against him, but it would seem he was not deposed from his high-priestship.

3. These words of St. Paul have caused perplexity to some persons, as though they were inconsistent with the example and precept of our blessed Lord, in respect to those who smite us on the one cheek; but the Apostle's conduct does not require any laboured excuse. He spoke under the feelings and (if we will) the excitement of a natural indignation at a wrong and violent breach of justice committed in open court; it was of moment that he should vindicate himself from such contempt and indignity. In reading the doings of the apostles it is not necessary to expect in them perfection from human weaknesses; such are quite compatible with the inspi-

ration under which they spoke and acted. The gift of inspiration does not overrule all imperfections of style in writing, but guides unto all truth, and in like manner does not preserve apostles from a "sharp contention," or from indignant words.

5. This has been explained by saying that St. Paul did not know who was the high-priest, as his long absence from Jerusalem might render such ignorance probable; but his knowledge of the constitution of the Sanhedrim would tell him that he who sat in the place of the judge and president must be the high-priest. Others have thought that he spoke ironically,—“I did not know him who has commanded so unjust an action to be done, as the high-priest:” but the most simple explanation is, that St. Paul admits he spoke in haste, and would say, “I did not consider, brethren, that he was the high-priest, for it is written,” &c.

6. St. Paul made use of the interruption occasioned by the foregoing circumstance to win over one part of the Sanhedrim to his interest. The parties of the Pharisees and Sadducees stood opposed to each other, the high-priest leaning to the latter; against the materialistic notion of this sect St. Paul made the declaration that on account of his belief in the resurrection of the dead he was called in question. This affirmation had a remarkable effect; the two parties fell into contention with each other, and so the Apostle escaped their hands. If we compare what took place at this time with the earlier ac-

counts in this book of the treatment of the Christians by the Sanhedrim, we shall perceive that a great change had taken place in the views of the Pharisees concerning them. In the former cases Pharisees and Sadducees were banded together against the Church, but the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead did not come into question; but we find, chap. vi. 7, that already priests who were for the most part of the Pharisees, "were obedient to the faith," and the advice given by Gamaliel admits that at least Christ might be the Messiah; but now the party of the Pharisees seems to have gone so far as to shew that they esteemed their difference with the Sadducees of more consequence than that with the Christians. Hence is explained the fact that according to the accounts of Hegesippus, (Euseb., *Hist. Eccles.*, ii. 23), and Josephus, *xx.* 9, 1,) James, the brother of our Lord, was so generally honoured by the Jews as to be called the Just. All this would shew how near the influential part of the Jewish people were to the recognition of Christ as the Messiah, and, it would seem, were turned aside from the confession of the Gospel by the violence of a small band of fanatics who ruled the party of the Pharisees.

10. As each of the contending parties was anxious to lay hold of St. Paul, the one to defend him, the other to wreak their vengeance on him, he was in great danger of being torn in pieces by the two.

11. Either in a dream, or while awake, in what is

called a state of exstasis, the Lord appeared to His Apostle to strengthen and comfort him. Between this and the next verse there is a very striking contrast. In the one we are told of the secret influence of the great Head of the Church comforting and strengthening the Apostle of truth; in the other, of the enemies of truth, entering into a fierce but vain conspiracy against it. Whether these men were of the sect then existing in Jerusalem called Zealots, (a band of murderers who professed an uncompromising zeal for the law,) or persons hired by the high-priest Ananias, we are not told.

14. The reason why these men addressed themselves rather to the chief priests and elders (who were mostly Pharisees), than to the party of the Sadducees, (as would seem at first sight most likely,) would appear to be this: that the Sadducees, though adverse to Paul, and to all religious zeal, were at the same time indifferent to the law, and would not be likely to countenance a conspiracy which had for its object the maintenance of the Mosaic law. The Sadducees were a sect of cold unbelievers, who hated Christianity indeed, but with the supercilious hatred of men of the world, who do not commonly make use of open persecution.

16. Whether Paul's sister's son was an inhabitant of Jerusalem is uncertain. The mention of the chief captain taking the young man by the hand (ver. 19) is one of those minute notices so peculiar to Holy Scripture. The Roman officer could thereby inspire

the young man with confidence to speak openly to him.

23. The word translated 'spearman' is literally 'soldiers taking the right hand' (*dexiolaboi*)—most probably a sort of foot-soldiers, who were added to the cavalry and fought on the right hand of the horse-soldiers.

26. Of the person and character of Claudius Lysias nothing is known to us. Antonius Felix, to whom the letter is addressed, was a brother of Pallas, the notorious freedman of the mother of Claudius Cæsar, and favourite of the emperor. Tacitus the historian describes Felix "as practising every kind of lust and cruelty in the province of Judæa, with the power of a king and the mind of a slave." He was accused to the emperor by the Jews, but shielded from punishment through the intervention of Pallas. The kind of letter which was sent with a prisoner, as in this case, was called by the Romans *elogium*.

27. This representation of the case does not speak well for the truthfulness of Lysias Claudius. It is a false, or only partly true, statement of the case. St. Paul appealed to his right of Roman citizenship, and did not owe his exemption from scourging to any inquiry or consideration on the part of the Roman Governor.

31. Antipatris, on the road from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, was built by Herod the first, and called after his father Antipater. When the danger of being waylaid by the Jewish conspirators was past,

his foot-soldiers were sent back, ver. 32. Felix inquires concerning St. Paul's birthplace, as the letter of the governor had not mentioned this. The former palace of Herod was called the judgment-hall (*prætorium*), because it had become the place of residence of the Roman proconsul, who probably had apartments in the building for the reception of prisoners of St. Paul's condition.

CHAP. XXIV. 1. Five days, that is, since St. Paul left Jerusalem for Cæsarea. The object of the high-priest and of the council was, in spite of St. Paul's Roman citizenship, to get him into their hands, and in order to effect this, they make no mention of the fact that they wished to condemn him to death, but represent the matter as a question of Temple right. Their zeal for this was the more fired by the remembrance of the repeated attempts made by the Roman Emperor and Governor to profane the Temple.

2. The construction of the commencement of the speech of Tertullus is better thus rendered: "Seeing that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation always and in all places by thy good care, we accept it," &c. The "very worthy deeds" mean in the original, 'benefits,' 'improvements,' implying that since the government of Felix great improvements on the mode of his successors had taken place in the manner of administering justice, &c. This was notoriously false, as the whole government of Felix had been one of selfish exaction. No reader can fail

to observe the difference between this rhetorical flourish of gross flattery on the part of the hired orator, and the calm dignity with which the Apostle begins his defence. Without speaking in a manner to offend the Roman Governor, he bestows on him no undeserved praises, yet he recognises the experience of Felix as judge in such matters for many years. This is the only thing that could be said with truth of the Governor which would not have been an accusation of his character.

5. The term Nazarene was the most contemptuous Tertullus could use. To the mind of a Jew it carried with it a contradiction of His pretensions to be the Messiah. (St. John vii. 42.)

10. It might have been enough for St. Paul simply to give an account of the nature of the accusation against him in order to overturn it. But the Apostle so directs his address that it shall not simply answer the purpose of being a defence of himself, but likewise be calculated to make an impression on Felix, as it really does, though but temporarily. The merciful providence of God so ordered it, that even this hardened bad man should have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel, and of turning from his evil ways. But he would not avail himself of the opportunity thus offered, and another never came.

11. He gives a special reason for his answering more cheerfully for himself. He had arrived only twelve days ago in Jerusalem from a foreign country, and accordingly the crime of which he was accused,

that of profaning the Temple, was altogether recent. The Procurator might, therefore, from his long acquaintance with Jewish customs, institute a most searching inquiry. In the twelve days which the Apostle speaks of must be reckoned the five which had elapsed since his imprisonment. They may be thus calculated : (1.) The day of his arrival in Jerusalem, ch. xxi. 15—17. (2.) The meeting with St. James, ch. xxi. 18. (3.) The undertaking of the Nazarite vow, ch. xxi. 26. (4, 5, 6, 7.) The time of the Nazarite vow, interrupted by the tumult and his being arrested, and the day of arrest, ch. xxi. 27, &c. (8.) St. Paul before the Sanhedrim, ch. xxii. 30, xxiii. 1—10. (9.) The conspiracy of the Jews and its discovery, ch. xxiii. 12, &c., and on the same day before midnight the departure of St. Paul from Jerusalem. This reckoned in with the others will make up the five days spoken of ch. xxiv. 1. He was addressing Felix on the thirteenth.

14. Having denied the accusation of being a mover of sedition, he enters on the charge of being a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. In spite of the malicious word 'heresy' used, he was a worshipper of the God of his fathers; he was no enemy of the religion existing in his nation and protected by the Romans. But he saw in Christianity the fulfilment, not the abrogation, of the laws and the prophets. As the Sadducees had joined in the accusation before the council, St. Paul brings forward here likewise the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. He

would intimate that the real ground of offence was not because he had profaned the temple, but because he preached the resurrection of the dead, which, though they themselves, the Jews in general, allowed, was called in question by some of his accusers. But besides this the Apostle might have in view his judge, upon whom nothing was so likely to make an impression as the declaration of the resurrection of the just and the unjust. So charitably did the Apostle act even towards the unjust and unprincipled Felix.

16. "In this do I exercise myself," &c., viz. in respect to this hope and this truth just spoken of.

17. St. Paul means after the four years which had elapsed since his last visit to Jerusalem, ch. xviii. 22. The alms were the collections made by the Greek and Asiatic Christians, 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 9; Rom. xv. 25. The Church at Jerusalem consisted for the most part of native Jews, so that the Apostle could rightly say that he brought alms to his nation. The oblations (*prosphoras*) were the sacrifices at the feast which he came to offer. The Nazaritish vow which he took on him, together with the offerings on account of it, was something over and above, which was added from circumstances befalling him in Jerusalem. In both these—alms towards man, oblations towards God—is exemplified what he spoke of, ver. 16, with respect to a conscience void of offence.

18. "Whereupon" means while engaged in the

performance of these things, paying sacrifices and vows in the temple, and purified after the manner of a Nazarite.

22. The Jews no doubt expected that Felix, out of contempt of the subject-matter of dispute, a question about Jewish worship and religion, would have left the matter in their hands without waiting for the chief captain. But it would seem that St. Paul had not failed in making an impression on the Roman governor, transient though it was. From his six years' government of Judæa he had more perfect knowledge of the rise and spread of Christianity, and did not feel disposed so hastily to settle the matter as the Jews desired. He had also, as we learn ver. 26, other low greedy motives for delaying the matter and keeping St. Paul a prisoner. He would, like selfish worldly men, be under the influence of mixed feelings—a kind of fear lest religion should be true, and a dread of the consequences, some curiosity about the truths it professed to teach, mingling with his habitual carelessness and love of money. Felix is a standing example of the impression usually made on such men—they hear, and tremble, and delay.

24. This Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, whose death is mentioned ch. xii. 23. She first married Azoras, Prince of Emesa, but left him and married Felix. As a Jewess by birth, she naturally felt a curiosity to hear from St. Paul about the promised Messiah. But on a woman of so aban-

done a character the message of the Gospel did not make more lasting impression than it had done on Felix, indeed we do not read that it made any, while Felix trembled.

26. Although Felix must have known St. Paul's incapacity to give money, even if he had the inclination, he was aware, no doubt, of the love of the Christians towards the great Apostle, and of their willingness to pay for his release, had he thought it right to make use of such means to procure his freedom, which of course he could not.

27. These two years spent by St. Paul in the prison of Cæsarea, might seem to man's eyes lost to the Apostle, since he could not actively work in the cause of the Church. But they were not really so. What precious time would they prove to the holy Apostle of meditation and thought, and preparation for future labours! Much study and thought are part of the vocation of the minister of Christ, as well as active work and preaching. As Felix had reason to apprehend that the Jews would accuse him to the Emperor, as they actually did, he sought to soften their resentment by leaving an innocent prisoner in bonds.

CHAP. XXV. 1. We learn from the history of the time that Nero came to the imperial throne in the year of our Lord 56, and that in the seventh year of his reign, A.D. 62, Porcius Festus was appointed to the governorship of Judæa. Of the history and character of Festus little or nothing is left

on record. He died after he had been governor but a few years. When he had entered on his office his first object was naturally to become better acquainted with the capital of his province, and accordingly he visits Jerusalem.

2. The chief of the Jews who informed Festus against St. Paul were no doubt members of the Sanhedrim, as they are called, ver. 15, "elders."

5. "Those among you who are able," means those among you who are invested with authority from the council to undertake the prosecution, and to act as deputies for the rest.

8. These were the three main points of accusation : compare ch. xxi. 28, xxiv. 5. The Jews seem to have made against him wild and utterly ungrounded charges.

9. The inquiry was whether St. Paul would go to Jerusalem to be tried before the Sanhedrim in the presence of Festus ; "before me" was added to make the proposal more specious, since in Jerusalem, before the Sanhedrim, the power of condemnation would actually have been handed over to the Jews. Festus must have felt sure St. Paul would refuse the proposed change of tribunal. The right of appeal to his Emperor was the prerogative of Roman citizens. It was the design of the great Head of the Church that the Apostle should go to Rome (ch. xxiii. 11), and thus by his very imprisonment at Cæsarea was it brought about.

13. This Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II., son of

the elder Agrippa (ch. xii.), and grandson of Herod I. After his father's death he was brought up at the court of Claudius Cæsar, with whom he stood in high favour. He was appointed by him to the tetrarchy formerly held by Philip and Lysanias with the addition of the title of king. Under Nero he obtained even greater influence. He outlived the destruction of Jerusalem, and died in the third year of the reign of Trajan. Bernice, or Berenice, was his sister, first married to her uncle Herod, Prince of Chalcis, afterwards to Polemon, King of Cilicia. She was a woman of very great beauty, so much so that the Emperor Titus was captivated by her charms, and only restrained from making her his wife from political reasons. Her character has been laden with the suspicion of a great sin.

19. From his long imprisonment Festus expected that crimes of a political character were laid to the charge of St. Paul. As he found, however, this was not the case, he might have concluded that the accusations against him by the Jews proceeded from malice. In speaking to Agrippa of the Jewish religion, Festus used a word of double meaning ('*deisidaimonia*,' the same used by St. Paul in speaking to the Athenians, ch. xvii. 22.) It does not signify superstition in a bad sense exactly, but admits of a good meaning which Agrippa might put on it, while Festus used it in his own sense.

20. He keeps back the motive which really actuated him, ver. 9.

21. Augustus (in Greek *Sebastos*), or venerable, was the name given to all the emperors since the time of Augustus Caesar.

23. This was the first fulfilment of our Lord's prediction to the Apostle that he should be brought before kings, ch. xv. 9.

24. This contains a somewhat exaggerated account of what had taken place, and an undue praise of Festus' own justice and conduct. Both in the case of Festus and of Lysias, the governor of the fort Antonia in Jerusalem, we find a suppression of all the facts, and yet a representation of the case sufficiently accurate to look like the truth.

CHAP. XXVI. 5. "If they would testify" might be rendered more in accordance with the original, "if they were willing to testify," which they were not, because their testimony as to the Apostle's former strictness as a Pharisee would be the strongest argument in favour of the truth of the religion to which he had been converted.

7. St. Paul designates under the title "our twelve tribes" the whole Jewish people. See James i. 1. This appellation was not forfeited although only two tribes had returned from captivity. As belonging to the theocracy, every Jew claimed to be a member of the twelve tribes. And even historically speaking the ten tribes were not unrepresented in the Jewish people after the captivity, since it cannot be supposed that every member of the ten tribes

was carried into captivity, or that they all remained there.

8. The resurrection of the dead was the fundamental article of the Gospel, and had especially excited the hatred of the Jews. This resurrection they would not acknowledge (ch. xxv. 19), and so the Apostle in his address to Agrippa, having spoken of the hope for which he was accused of the Jews, breaks off with the exclamation, "Why should it be thought," &c.

10. We are not to suppose that St. Paul is alluding only to the case of St. Stephen when he says, "When they were put to death," but to other martyrs who suffered in that persecution, whose names are unknown to us.

12. For the explanation of this account of St. Paul's conversion, see ch. ix. and xxii.

20. The specification is threefold. St. Paul says he preached, 1, to those in Damascus; 2, to the city of Jerusalem; 3, to the Gentiles. In his defence against the Jews it was of consequence to put forward prominently his exertions on behalf of that nation. The subject-matter of his preaching he gives in a form similar to that employed by St. John Baptist. (St. Luke iii. 8.) Before such an assembly it was necessary thus to express himself, as this was a mode of speech which they would readily understand. The deeper mysteries of the Gospel he withholds as unsuitable to his present hearers.

22. The words rendered "witnessing to small and great" will admit of another interpretation more exactly in accordance with the rules of the Greek language, viz., being witnessed to by small and great, i.e. by young and old, "having a good report rendered as to my religious behaviour." Comp. ch. vi. 3, x. 22.

24. The whole of St. Paul's discourse, and especially the last words, was utterly unintelligible to the worldly-minded statesman. He expressed his impatience in a loud exclamation, "Thou art mad, O Paul." His irreligious heart was unmoved by the holy fervour of the inspired speaker, and he treated his words as the fancies of an enthusiastic student whose mind had been upset or warped by too intense reading of the Jewish Scriptures. Such appeared to be the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead to a busy astute politician, who yet knew the Old Testament Scriptures—mere madness!

25. "Words of soberness"—words whose characteristic is that of sober common sense, as most opposed to the ravings of one who is mad. No writer or speaker can display less than St. Paul does the marks of an enthusiastic mind likely to be upset from its balance. His writings shew very great and highly cultivated logical powers, and in his most vehement exhortations and pleadings the very characteristic here claimed, soberness, is conspicuous.

26. The whole of the transactions about which St. Paul speaks, especially the death of Christ and His resurrection, did not happen in some obscure part of

the land, but in Jerusalem itself, and the king could not but be cognizant of them. He appeals to well-known facts, which might then, if they had not happened, or if they were delusions, be refuted. But the death and resurrection of Christ could not be denied in the generation in which they took place, however they might be explained. The accusers of the Apostle do not venture to say that Christ had not risen, but that St. Paul was trying to abolish the religion and customs of the Jews.

27. The Apostle here makes a fervent appeal to the conscience of King Agrippa. He professed to believe the prophets, nay, he did believe; how then could he deny those truths of Christ's sufferings and resurrection about which the prophets had so plainly spoken? But the appeal to the statesman Agrippa was as much in vain as the solemn words about judgment to come to the unprincipled Felix. All worldly greatness and hopes must be sacrificed if King Agrippa is to become a Christian, and this sacrifice he has no thought of making. It was easier to suppose St. Paul was mad or wild in his interpretation of the prophets, than to act on his belief in them. And yet St. Paul stood before him, who had sacrificed position and hopes as dear to himself as Agrippa's were to him.

28. This expression of King Agrippa must be understood as the mocking, ironical words of an easy man of the world, who chose to silence conscience and conviction by a jest. They cannot be taken as

indicating an inclination on the king's part to become a Christian, and are not parallel with Pilate's saying, St. John xviii. 38, which expresses the wearied hopeless feeling of a man who had vainly sought after truth in different philosophical schools, and at length disbelieved in its existence. The very word "Christian" which Agrippa uses shews he was not in earnest. The term, originally of heathen origin, (see ch. xi. 26,) would, in the mouth of a Jew, be another word for heresy. Ridicule was Agrippa's refuge against conviction.

29. The superiority of the accused over the judge is shewn even in the point of polished courtesy. How noble is the Apostle's reply to the irony of the king!

30. Perhaps this last expression of St. Paul had made an impression on the king's mind which he would have had some difficulty in concealing if the discussion continued any longer. He accordingly rose and broke up the court. With him rose up, according to their rank, the Procurator, Bernice, and the rest who sat with him. After they had left the audience-chamber they declared their united conviction that St. Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds—at the worst they esteemed him to be a harmless enthusiast. His appeal to Cæsar, however, rendered it necessary that he should be sent to Rome. Thus was he to reach that great capital, which otherwise he might not have visited.

CHAP. XXVII. 1. St. Luke relates the voyage of St. Paul and his companions into Italy in a more detailed manner than any other event in the history. From the narrative there is no doubt that the Evangelist was St. Paul's companion, together with Aristarchus. He speaks throughout in the first person, and narrates the different circumstances of the voyage and shipwreck in a way which only one who was himself present could have done. It has been thought that St. Luke must have kept a journal of all that happened on this memorable voyage, and no doubt we must explain the extreme minuteness with which everything concerning it is told by a consideration of the great weight which attached to this event in the Apostle's life. The passage of St. Paul to Rome was fraught with momentous consequences to the Church. It was the greatest change which had happened in his position since his conversion. Well might St. Luke dwell on every particular with the utmost minuteness. This chapter is full of technical expressions, which indicate a scrupulous attention on the part of the eye-witness to all that took place. For an account of the nautical particulars of this chapter, an interesting book may be consulted, James Smith's "*Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*," (Lond., 1848.) The band or cohort called Augustus' was probably one of the five cohorts stationed at Cæsarea, and regarded as the Emperor's body-guard, and employed, as in this

case, on duties more particularly connected with the Emperor's service.

2. Adramyttium was on the coast of Mysia. The ship on which St. Paul embarked was bound for this port—a merchant-vessel on its return homewards. The Roman centurion took advantage of this opportunity to get the prisoner conveyed to the coast of Asia Minor, from whence by another vessel (ver. 6) to proceed to Italy. Aristarchus is mentioned ch. xix. 29, xx. 4; Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24.

3. The courteous behaviour which St. Paul received at the hands of the Centurion Julius may be attributed in part to directions of the Procurator as to mild treatment, but more particularly to the interest which a man of the Apostle's character must excite in the minds of all impartial, candid men.

4. "We sailed under Cyprus" means that they brought the ship under the high shore of Cyprus for protection against the wind.

6. It seems probable from ver. 38 that this ship was a merchant-vessel carrying wheat from Egypt into Italy. This was not its direct course from Alexandria to Italy, but it had touched at the harbour of Lycia, either from stress of weather or for the purpose of trade.

7. The wind then came from the north, so that the ship was driven up and down from Cnidus to Crete. Cnidus is a peninsula in Doris, with a capital of the same name. Salmone, a promontory on the east coast of Crete.

8. Of the place called here "the fair havens" nothing is known. The name would seem from ver. 12 to be applied rather as an euphemism than as a fact. [When the ancients described a stormy sea or dangerous coast they would use words of good omen, and speak of it as what they desired it to be, rather than what it was. So the Cape of Good Hope was first called by the Portuguese officer who discovered it, *Cabo Tormentoso*, or stormy cape; but John II., King of Portugal, having no doubt that he had found the long-desired route to India, gave it a name of better omen.] The town Lasea is altogether unknown.

9. The feast was that of atonement, Levit. xvi. 29, xxiii. 26, which took place in the month Tisri, i.e. towards the end of September. It was, therefore, after the autumnal equinox, when sailing became dangerous, and usually ceased.

10. This warning on the part of St. Paul was not derived from any knowledge he possessed of seamanship, but was of a prophetic character. He perceived that danger threatened not only the vessel and cargo, but also the lives of the passengers. From ver. 24 we may infer that the lives of those in the ship were granted in answer to the Apostle's prayers. It was natural that the centurion, a heathen, should rather follow the advice of the captain and the owner of the ship than St. Paul's exhortation.

12. But under the circumstances it would have

been the least evil to winter in the inconvenient harbour. The harbour Phoenix, lying on the south coast of the island, formed such a bend that one shore stretched to the north-west, another to the south-west. It was therefore particularly desirable to winter in. Supposed to be the modern Lutro.

14. The wind called Euroclydon was a north-east wind. The meaning of the word is 'broad dashing.' It is now called Gregalia, the most violent wind blowing in the Mediterranean. There is another reading, which by some is thought preferable, namely, Euracylon, which means a north-east wind.

17. The 'helps' mean chains, cables, &c., for strengthening the hull of the ship to bear the violence of the waves. Our version correctly translates "strake sail," words which mean literally 'letting down the furniture of the ship (*skeuos*),' which is applicable to the tackling, sails, and mast. The vessels of the ancients, like our boats on rivers, had masts which could be lowered. In this case the mast with the sails on it was lowered so as to lighten the sailing of the ship and prevent its running on a sandbank (*syrtis*).

18. The ship, being a merchant-vessel, could be lightened of its freight, probably corn; then, as the danger becomes more pressing, they are forced to throw overboard the furniture of the ship—bedding, the baggage of the passengers, &c. These things are meant by the word used (*skeue*) rather than the

tackling, cordage, anchors, &c., which would be of such vital importance at that time.

20. In addition to the gloom of a starless night must be reckoned the danger of not knowing in what direction they were sailing—which belonged to all navigation before the invention of the compass.

23. Whether in a dream or waking vision we are not told. The "harm and loss" of the ship itself would have been spared them if they had listened to St. Paul's advice. The fulfilment of his warning, ver. 10, would naturally incline the captain and sailors to put more confidence in his present assurance. We cannot but observe, here as elsewhere, e.g. ch. xvii., how St. Paul takes advantage of any truth there was in heathenism in order to communicate so much of divine revelation as his hearers could receive. These heathen soldiers and sailors believed in the existence of messengers between God and man, and therefore could understand that the God "Whose St. Paul was and Whom he served" might send an angel or messenger to him, though they were not prepared to admit that there was but one God.

26. To the Apostle was revealed not merely the fact of the preservation of the crew and passengers, but likewise the manner and details of it.

27. The Adriatic is here taken in a wide sense, not merely for the Gulf of Venice, but likewise as

embracing the Ionian Sea. The sailors surmised that they were near land from the surge and breakers.

28. As they found the depth of the water decrease, their danger of course became the greater of striking against rocks, which are frequently found in the neighbourhood of small islands. Cæsar mentions (*Bell. Civ.* i. 25) the securing of ships by *four anchors* to prevent their being moved by the waves.

30. We see how little impression the words of St. Paul had made, at least on the sailors, since they distrust the promise given through him that all would be saved, and purpose to leave him in the ship, with the rest, to his fate. While they were lying at anchor, waiting for the daylight, the sailors, to insure their own preservation, made the treacherous attempt to let down the boat into the sea, under the pretence of casting anchor from the prow. It cannot be supposed that the master of the vessel, whose interest it was to preserve the ship, was a party to this plot of his servants, but in such circumstances as these the bonds of duty and obedience are easily broken, when by so doing a surer way of saving their lives presents itself.

31. Although the preservation of the lives of all had been promised, and would be effected by God's mercy, yet His providence makes use of human instruments, and has certain conditions on which the mercy is to be granted.

33. The storm commenced soon after they left the harbour of 'the fair havens,' and had continued four-

teen days, during which time, from anxiety and labour, they had not taken any regular meals, and had indeed scarcely eaten anything. The words of St. Paul, that they had continued fasting, having taken nothing, are of course not to be understood quite literally. It is a natural form of expression when speaking of an anxious time, when people are too much occupied to eat much, or to take any regular meals, that they have eaten nothing. The words that follow in the next verse, "this is for your health," mean somewhat more strongly than they sound to us: "this is for your safety, a condition of your escaping." St. Paul knew that the exertion of every person would be required in escaping to land, and that they all would need to use their utmost strength; so food was necessary not only for their present health, but for the very preservation of their lives.

35. This must be regarded as an ordinary meal, not, as some have supposed, of the character of the repast which among the early Christians preceded the Holy Eucharist. St. Paul gave thanks before breaking of bread and partaking of food. Compare St. Matthew xiv. 19, xv. 36; St. Mark viii. 6; St. John vi. 11.

37. The number of the persons on board the vessel shews that it was a ship of considerable size, especially taking into account the difference of ordinary vessels in ancient and modern days.

38. It is probable that the wheat which had formed

part of the freight had already been thrown into the sea, and that the portion now cast out was that which had been reserved for the consumption of the crew and passengers, and was no longer required, as they were about to abandon the ship altogether. At length, as St. Chrysostom remarks, these heathens had such confidence in St. Paul as even to cast out their provisions.

40. As soon as they perceived land which offered a flat coast, the mariners determined to thrust their ship upon it. This they did : 1. By cutting off the four anchors and dropping them into the sea, to save weight and incumbrance. 2. By loosing the bands with which they had tied the rudder to the ship to keep it still during the violence of the storm. They now unfastened it for use. 3. By hoisting the top sail on the mast (*artemon*) in order to make to the shore. If, as was supposed, ver. 17, the mast could be let down, it was now raised again for the sail to be hoisted on it.

41. The place into which the ship was thrust would appear to be a tongue of land running out into the sea, and surrounded by it on either side (*dithalassos*). The extreme point of it was covered with water, so that while the forepart of the ship struck on the dry shore, or under shallow water, the hinder part was exposed to the waves. The place where the ship stranded did not allow those on board to reach land except by swimming.

45. The motive which influenced the soldiers to

this purpose was different from that which actuated the mariners, ver. 30. It was not, as in that case, a mere selfish attempt to save their own lives at the cost of others, but the hard, stern sense of military duty, which was peculiarly a Roman feature of character. It was their duty at all hazards not to let their prisoners escape. The centurion, however, had not remained insensible to the claims on their gratitude, at least, which St. Paul had established. He does not share the fears of his soldiers as to the prisoners escaping, but commanded that they should swim to shore. This they did, partly on planks, which were at hand in the ship, and partly on pieces of the ship itself, broken off by the waves and shock of stranding, or torn off by the people themselves. And so, as St. Luke concludes this most graphic description of the storm and wreck, "they escaped all safe to land."

CHAP. XXVIII. 1. There seems no doubt that the island on which St. Paul and the rest were cast, was Malta. There is a small island off the Illyrian coast, now called Meleda, but the direction which the ship afterwards took on leaving the island for Italy decides that Malta, near Sicily, must be intended. Local tradition likewise claims Malta as the place of St. Paul's shipwreck.

2. The Greeks and Romans used the term 'barbarians,' 'barbarous people,' of all who did not speak their own languages. The inhabitants of Malta were

of Phenician origin, the island having been colonized from Carthage.

3. It is not expressly mentioned that the snake was of a poisonous kind, but the whole narrative leads us to suppose so, and the natives, who were likely to be acquainted with its nature, believed it to be deadly. Tradition tells us that since that time no poisonous snakes have existed on the island. Certainly the non-existence of poisonous reptiles in Malta at the present day is by no means an argument against that island having been the scene of the events related in this chapter.

4. The notion of a retributive justice and providence appears to have belonged to all people. The Greeks taught the opinion under the names Nemesis and Dike, and by all nations the belief in the certainty of revenge and just punishment overtaking at length the criminal, has been held. There is no reason for supposing that the Maltese were acquainted with the Greek mythology on the subject, as the feeling expressed by this "barbarous people" is natural to the civilized and uncivilized alike. The change of opinion, from believing St. Paul a murderer, to thinking he was a god, is such as might be expected in untutored minds. In a similar way, the inhabitants of Lystra first wished to do sacrifice to SS. Paul and Barnabas because they had witnessed a miracle performed by them, and thought them to be gods, and yet afterwards so far changed their minds as to stone them. See ch. xiv.

7. Malta belonged to the prætorship of Sicily, and the governor was the legate of the prætor there. The circumstance of St. Paul's escape from the effects of the viper's bite would come to the ears of the governor, and interest him. He entertained St. Paul and his two companions, Aristarchus and Luke, as we cannot suppose that the whole of those wrecked are intended by the word "us." The father of the governor lay sick of intermittent fever (in the original, the plural "fevers" is used) and of dysentery. St. Paul prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him. Tradition says that this Publius was the first Bishop of Malta.

11. Castor and Pollux, in heathen mythology, the twin-sons of Jupiter and Leda, (called in the original Dioscuroi). The constellation named from them, "the Twins," (*Gemini*), was supposed to bring safety from a storm if it appeared over the ship: hence the Dioscuroi were the tutelar deities of sailors; and ships, as in this case, frequently carried their image as their sign, or figure-head.

12. The voyage proceeds quite in a regular course, from Malta to Syracuse, from thence in the Sicilian strait to Rhegium, the modern Reggio, and then through the Tyrrhenian sea to Puteoli, the modern Puzzuolo, near Naples. That there were Christians in Puteoli is an evidence of the wide spread of the Gospel in Italy. It is most likely that the Church had been planted there from Rome, though some have thought it might have been from Alexandria,

between which city and Puteoli there was at that time much intercourse.

15. As St. Paul and his companions had stayed seven days in Puteoli, the Christians in Rome would have an opportunity of hearing of their approach. It would seem that in consideration of the importance of the Church in Rome, a deputation was sent thence to meet the Apostle. Appii Forum was a town on the Appian Road, (*Via Appia*,) forty-three miles from Rome; "The Three Taverns," an inn ten miles nearer Rome. At this latter place another company of Christians waited for St. Paul, those who had gone as far as Appii Forum probably making known their intention. At the sight of these brethren who, out of love and reverence, had come from Rome to meet him, St. Paul's heart kindled with thankfulness towards God, and he went forward with good courage and confidence as to the field of his labours for the Gospel, and his own prospects in Rome. His entrance into this city was a momentous event in the life of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Rome was then the mistress of the world, and in her were assembled most heterogeneous elements. The Church of Christ had taken root there, and the saints of the Lord were living in the city; but the power of evil had also its seat there, and a form of Antichrist had already appeared in the person of the then reigning emperor, Nero.

16. The captain of the guard was the præfect of the prætorian guard, (of these there were usually

two,) which was the Emperor's body-guard. This office had been filled by the well-known Burrus, who died in March, 62, and could not have been the person to whom the Apostle was delivered. The favour of dwelling by himself, with a soldier that kept him, instead of being confined in prison with the rest, St. Paul no doubt in part owed to the representation of Festus, which did not lay any capital crime to his charge, and partly to the influence of the Centurion, whose esteem the Apostle had earned by his conduct during the voyage and the storm.

17. Three days after his arrival St. Paul called together the chief of the Jews, in accordance with that principle of his apostleship, Rom. i. 16, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Notwithstanding all the bitter experience of the past, his love towards his own people had not been weakened. The first three days of his sojourn in Rome no doubt he had given up to intercourse with the Christian disciples, consisting of Gentiles and Jews. In his address to the Jews he clears himself from the charge of having committed anything against the law, and gently intimates, that though forced to appeal to the Roman emperor, he had done so unwillingly and simply in self-defence, without any thought of laying a charge against his own countrymen.

21. This answer of the Jews is a perplexing one, when the close intercourse betwixt Rome and Judæa

is taken into account. Is it not surprising that the Jews in Palestine should not have sent some tidings to the Jews in Rome concerning a person like St. Paul, and concerning proceedings which must have excited so much interest in Jerusalem? But let these two points be taken into consideration:—

1. *Before* the appeal of St. Paul the Jews in Palestine had no particular reasons for informing the Jews in Rome of the proceedings concerning him, since they had ground for hoping that he would never leave Judæa, but that they should be able to get him into their hands. Even during the Apostle's two years' imprisonment in Cæsarea, the Jews might not altogether abandon the hope of prevailing on the Roman governor to deliver him into their power. Their proceedings, therefore, against St. Paul, though of much interest to themselves, were not of a kind which would be of any importance to the Jewish community dwelling in Rome.

2. Next, *after* St. Paul had appealed to the Emperor, and it was known that he would be sent to Rome, it was *hardly possible*, before the arrival of St. Paul himself there, to send any tidings. The Apostle, it would seem, (ch. xxvii. 1,) was sent at once, and as the voyage took place late in the autumn, and the season for sailing was past, no other vessel was likely to arrive in Italy before that which conveyed the Apostle. It was not probable that the Jews would send a vessel on purpose, and

the same causes which hindered the ship in which St. Paul was from reaching Italy at an earlier time, would hinder others. These two causes seem quite sufficient to account for the fact, at first sight surprising, that though so long a time had elapsed since the first accusation against St. Paul, and the intercourse between Judæa and Rome was so constant, still the chief of the Jews in the latter place had not received letters from Judæa concerning him. The (perhaps) still more surprising circumstance, that no private intelligence concerning the Apostle had reached them, "neither any of the brethren that came from thence shewed or spake any harm of thee," may be accounted for by supposing that the feelings of the party in Jerusalem which persecuted St. Paul were not shared by the chief and better disposed part of the people.

22. The fact that an important Christian Church (such as the Epistle to the Romans, written at an earlier period than St. Paul's arrival in that city, shews the Church in Rome to have been,) should not be better known to the chief of the Jews living there, seems at first sight surprising. Some commentators have thought that the Christians to whom St. Paul wrote his letter, had been dispersed in the edict published by Claudius against the Jews, by which they were banished from the city. And at first the Christians were generally confounded by the heathen with the Jews, from whom their earliest converts were made. But another explanation seems

more probable, namely, this,—that the chief of the Jews, from hatred and contempt against the new sect, were unwilling to express any other acquaintance with them, than the disparaging opinion of their being everywhere spoken against. From what follows, we find how hardened were many of them against the truth, even when they heard it from St. Paul's lips.

23. St. Paul, during the first part of his stay in Rome, took his abode with some friend,—it has been thought in the house of Aquila, but of this there is no proof. Afterwards he dwelt in his own hired house, (ver. 30). The same effects followed the preaching of the Gospel in Rome as in Athens,—some believed, some did not, (ch. xvii. 32, 34). Such has been its history throughout. In no place does the greater number of people seem to have embraced the truths taught by the apostles. Men were influenced as their hearts were earnest or not in their love of truth.

26. St. Paul quotes that solemn passage of Scripture which our Lord Himself so often applied to the Jews. The Bible teaches us throughout that the reception of religious truth is dependent on the moral character : St. John vii. 17.

30. Although St. Paul was allowed to dwell in his own hired house, it was still as a prisoner. From this imprisonment it is generally believed he was released after the expiration of the two years. It was in his second imprisonment (of which we have no

direct historical testimony, only allusions, as in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy,) that St. Paul suffered martyrdom. This second imprisonment, it is supposed, took place about two or three years after the conclusion of the first; the Apostle is thought during that interval to have reached Spain in his mission, and from thence to have been brought a prisoner to Rome.

31. This verse forms the conclusion of this book, and resembles the manner in which the Evangelist concludes his Gospel. It was a *narrative*, and not a letter, and therefore there is no formal salutation. Why St. Luke did not proceed to give an account of St. Paul's trial, and the after occurrences in his life until the end, has been variously accounted for. It has been thought that the rest was known to Theophilus, and that this narrative supplied the preceding history of which he required a fuller account. But no doubt the object for which this work was given to the Church was fully attained by the relation as we have it before us. We have presented before our eyes a type of the Christian Church from the beginning to the end; its progress, hindrances, acceptance, rejection, yet ultimate growth. The grain of mustard-seed is seen to grow and to spread into leaves and branches, and the ultimate result of the Gospel may be learnt from the early beginning as preserved for our instruction and comfort by the Holy Spirit.

In the progress of the Church of Christ from East to

West as given us in the Acts of the Apostles, we may observe three centres from which the development is made. First, we find the Gospel preached especially to the Jews, and then Jerusalem is the centre of the Christian life; next, it proceeds to the frontier of the Jewish and heathen world, and Antioch becomes the centre of its working; lastly, it gains firm footing in the centre of the heathen world, in Rome itself, and then its victory over heathendom is assured. Henceforth the history of the Church, though distinct from that of the world, runs side by side with it. With the Gospel go all those blessings by which man is raised. Where Christianity is not, there is barbarism, whatever outward advantages and civilization may appear to exist.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

A.D.	Rom. Emp.	Governors of Palestine.			Kings of neighbouring States.		A.D.	Events in the History of the Acts of the Apostles.	
		Judæa.	Galilee.	Gaulonitis.	Ablene.	Chalcis.			
33	Tiberius.	Pontius Pilate.	Herod Antipas.	Philip.			33	The Ascension of our Lord, ch. i.	
34							34	The Stoning of St. Stephen, ch. vii.	
35							35	The Conversion of St. Paul, ch. ix.	
36		Pilate removed.							
37	Caligula.		Antipas banished.				38	St. Paul's first journey to Jerusalem; see Acts ix. 26; compare Gal. i. 18.	
38		Herod Agrippa, king of the whole of Palestine.					41	St. Paul goes with Barnabas to Antioch, ch. xi. 25.	
41	Claudius.				Lysanias.	Herod, brother of Agrippa.	44	St. Paul's second journey to Jerusalem. First mission journey of St. Paul, ch. xiii. 1, & xiv. 28.	
44		Famine in Palestine.					49	St. Paul's return to Antioch, ch. xiv. 28.	
49		Roman Procurators.				Herod Agrippa the younger.	53	St. Paul's third journey to Jerusalem, ch. xviii. and Gal. ii. 1. Towards the end of the year the second mission journey.	
52		Banishment of the Jews from Rome, Acts xviii. 2.					53	St. Paul in Corinth.	
53			Agrippa the younger made governor of Gaulonitis and Ablene.			Annexed to Syria.			
54							55	Feast of Pentecost. St. Paul's fourth journey to Jerusalem. Third mission journey.	
55							56, 7	Residence in Ephesus.	
56							60	St. Paul's fifth journey to Jerusalem. Imprisonment there.	
63	Nero.		Porcius Festus, governor.				63	St. Paul brought before Festus.	
64							65	St. Paul's arrival in Rome.	
65							65	Acts of the Apostles written. Second imprisonment.	
67							67	Death of the Apostle.	

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